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MY CREED

BY

M. J. SAVAGE

BOSTON
GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET
1897

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1887

Dedication.

I DREAM of one to whom my thought will speak,
  One who will share the hope that ever sings
  The new-creation song of fairer things
That all true souls in all the ages seek.
In such a dream I refuge find when weak,
  When courage flows not from its wonted springs,
  And all my schemes seem vain imaginings
On which the Fates their hard revenges wreak.

To such a one as this I dedicate
  My reading of time's forces and their drift,—
    Of what I hold is purpose in the maze
That makes the tangle of our human fate:
  For such a soul will feel and help the lift
    Of love divine that bringeth better days.

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Every sensible man must have a creed. He who says, "I have no creed," or "I don't believe in creeds," gives expression to one of two beliefs: 1. That well-grounded opinions are unattainable; or, 2. That they are unimportant; and either of these opinions is itself a creed, though a very poor one.

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OUTGROWING THE OLD BELIEFS.

EVERY religion implies a theology; that is, a scheme or system of thought underlying it, out of which it springs and which in some general way, at least, it matches part by part. There is a great deal of loose talk in the modern world in favor of religion and against theology; and it seems to me to imply only a lack of clear thought. Persons who are opposing theology are opposing some definite kind of theology. If they are wise, they are not opposing theology itself. Every religion, with its theology, implies some sort of conception of the universe, and springs out of a cosmology to which it is fitted in some general way. No matter whether the person who holds his religious or theological opinions has thought about it or not, there is underlying his religion a theory of things; a certain way of thinking about the world, its origin, its nature; a certain way of thinking about God, his character, his method, his purposes; a certain way of thinking about man, as to what sort of being he is, where he came from, what his destiny is likely to be. Religion, then, springs out of and bases itself on a cosmology, a science of things. But, when the question is raised among us to-day whether science is a proper thing to refer to in the pulpit, it seems to be entirely forgotten that the very first words of the Bible are scientific. It begins with stating the scientific conception of the universe which was

held at that time, and out of which the religious thought and emotion naturally and necessarily sprung.

It follows from this that, when there passes any great change over the scientific thought of men, there must of necessity go along with it a corresponding change in theological thought and religious feeling. The one must of necessity draw after it the other; that is, provided men think clearly and follow out the lines of their thinking.

There have been great changes in the religious conceptions of the universe many times in the past. When Christianity superseded Paganism as the religion of the Roman Empire, it was little less than the creation of a new world of thought, of feeling; and, by as much as the old scientific conceptions of the Hebrews were adopted along with the religion, it gave a changed conception of the physical universe, so that it really created a new world for people to live in. When the American continent was discovered, it so changed the conceptions of the great mass of the people that they found themselves living in what was again practically a new world. And when the Ptolemaic conception of the universe gave place to the Copernican, once more, in a profounder and wider-reaching sense still, people found themselves the inhabitants of a new universe. All these were great and even fundamental changes; but we to-day are passing through a change profounder, farther-reaching in its results, than either of these. It is in the air. We talk about it lightly, newspapers refer to it, magazine articles are written about it; yet only a few people have waked up to comprehend just how much it means, and what are to be its far-reaching results.

The world we live in to-day is a new world, a world less than half a century old. It is made up of the same sun, the same stars, the same old earth; and yet our conception of

these is undergoing so radical a change that it is not too much to say we have a new earth, a new sun, new stars, a new God, a new humanity, a new religion, a new church, a new outlook for humanity. We may say in language calm, and yet without taking away one jot or one tittle from its meaning, what was said by the author of the Book of Revelation hundreds of years ago, "The first heaven and the first earth are passed away"; and the voice of the Eternal is heard, saying, "Behold, I make all things new."

The scope of the course of sermons upon which we are entering to-day proposes, first, to deal with this transition, to indicate some of the main outlines of the change from the old belief to the new one; then, in succeeding sermons, to take up and answer the question as to what we have left, what are the great fundamental beliefs which, so far as we can see, are so much a part of the nature of things that they are not likely to be disturbed or to pass away. There are thousands of persons who are feeling the change that is going on, and are wondering whether anything is going to be left.

All things seem in flux, in movement. As they look on, they become dizzy; and they mistake their own dizziness for an unsettled condition of God's universe. It seems to me, then, that we can render no better service to men than to outline the change that is going on, and to see what are the great fundamental, eternal principles that are part of the universe itself.

The task of this morning is to be to outline, so far as time will permit, this change, this transition from the old world to the new. As I face the question, there are two methods before me, one of which I must follow. Shall I treat it abstractly, simply dealing with principles, outlining the position in which the world stood half a century ago, pointing out

some of the principal points of change, and attempting to indicate where the world stands, intellectually and spiritually, at this hour? Shall I do this? Or shall I give to this story a personal flavor by relating something of my own experience, showing how I left the old and what road I followed in coming into the new? It would seem somewhat more modest, perhaps, to follow the first method; but there is always an added interest in that which has about it the flavor of personal experience. For there is nothing in which we are so much interested as in people,— what they think, how they feel, how the world looks to them, which way they are moving. The difference is like that which one might follow in indicating the course pursued in a journey from one city to another. One might describe the first city, tell how far it is to the next, indicate what towns lie along the road, the nature of the country, the mountains, valleys, streams that must be crossed, and leave it there. Or one may relate the story of his own personal journey from one city to the other, stating how he was impressed by what he saw, and giving some of the personal incidents that befell him by the way. It seems to me plain that the latter would be the more interesting method of the two. I trust, then, that I may be exempted from any charge of egotism if I choose the latter method, when I say that any man who can simply and plainly tell the story of his own religious experience in passing from the old faith into the new is telling not merely his own story, —he is telling the story of thousands of others. But, if I am to treat it in this way, there is only one person's story that I am fitted to tell, the one with which I am acquainted, — my own.

You will let me say farther that I have no sort of feeling that the personal incidents of my own experience are of any value in themselves. They only stand as symbols of that

which we all hold in common; and so I trust that you who have passed over substantially the same road will be thinking not so much of my experience as of your own, and of the parallels that may suggest themselves along the way.

I confess that, even after having decided to follow this method, as I stand here and look you in the faces, I shrink from it, especially from attempting to speak in this way. I could better read it, if I had it written; for, then, I should be able to lose myself somewhat in my paper, as I cannot while your eyes are facing me. But let me, as simply as I may, tell this story; and I shall weave into it as little of my own personal experience as possible, and thus I shall make it as much a story of all men as I am able to do.

My father was trained as a child in the extremest form of the old Calvinism. Among the earliest recollections of my boyhood is listening to him as he told about the sermons which he used to hear, and as he spoke of the moral revolt which he felt as he listened to the doctrines of fore-ordination, of the total depravity of men, and all that cast-iron religion, as of fate, in which the souls of men were held and led from the cradle to the grave, and on into the darkness of the future. As soon as he was able to think and act for himself, he cast off this old belief; and as the best thing he could do, under the circumstances, when he was, as he supposed, converted, he became a member of the Free-will Baptist church, in open revolt against the doctrines of Calvinism. In his early manhood, however, he moved away from the town of his birth to a place where there was no Free-will Baptist church, only a Methodist and Calvinistic societies. Finding himself still in revolt, and in sympathy with this doctrine of freedom as opposed to the old Calvinistic ideas, he became a member of the Methodist church. They, however, held service but once a month, the town being part of

a circuit. The other three Sundays we were obliged to stay at home or to attend a Calvinistic church. We generally went to the Congregationalist church three Sundays and the Methodist the fourth. There were, however, class-meetings and prayer-meetings that I remember attending frequently with father and mother when I was a little boy.

I grew up, then, in the country, in the midst of this intense religious atmosphere, without ever having the question suggested as to its divine authority and infallibility. I was, I suppose, and so far as I can remember, a "good" boy. I make no claims on the score of that, however. I only speak of it to emphasize the fact that, though regarding myself and being regarded as a good boy, in popular parlance, I never connected this with the idea of salvation or safety in another world. From my earliest thought on the subject, I grew up in the unquestioning belief that I must experience a "change of heart," or I could have no hope of salvation in the future world. So all my childhood long, as I looked up at the clouds and saw them drift across the bright blue, as I lay upon my back under the trees and watched the shadows, I dreamed of eternity, I dreamed of a very definite heaven only a little way above the sky. I dreamed of quite as definite a hell; and I can remember how I used to try to imagine eternity until my mind drooped weary, as if in a swoon, from the impossible task. I verily believed if I should happen to die, as some of my schoolmates did, before my experiencing this change of heart, I should not be able to enter the gates of the city of which I dreamed, but that my destiny would lead me another way.

It was natural, then, that I should think very much over this matter of conversion. When the minister came to call on us, I always expected that he would talk to me of the safety of my soul; and there were friends of my father and

mother who, faithfully as they believed,— faithfully, as I believe, from the stand-point which they occupied,— took every occasion to warn me of the danger in which I was living from day to day. I do not wonder at them as I look back. I rather wonder that there are any men, women, or children who are themselves Christians, who believe these things, who do not thus show their interest in the welfare of the souls of others. So long as the old minister — the last one who was settled for life in the Congregational parish — was living, there was no revival of religion, so far as I remember. But a young minister, fresh from the seminary, kindled with enthusiasm, came to be the minister of the church; and he at once set about what I have heard in the country called "getting up a revival of religion." I believe, from his stand-point, he was doing that which he ought to have done. His first work was to have a revival in the church. He appointed committees to visit the whole parish from house to house, he himself going with them, talking and praying with the members of the church, to rouse them to some sense of their duty and the work which they ought to be accomplishing for the salvation of their fellow-men. I remember the time when he came to our house, and talked with us and prayed.

In the winter following that there was a revival of religion; and large numbers of people were added to the membership of the church. During the winter of 1855 there was one of the most wide-spread revivals of religion with which I have ever been acquainted. It swept — so far as I knew, then — from North to South, and from East to West. There was an intense religious feeling and religious activity in our town. Hardly a man, woman, or child who was not touched by it, either by sympathy or opposition. I made up my mind at that time, as large numbers of my friends and

schoolmates had become members of the church, that this was the time for me to experience this change, if possible. There were not only preaching services on Sunday, and Sunday-school, the main work of which was to convert children, but Sunday evening prayer-meeting and several prayer-meetings during the week, part of the time every night. Then the young people had their own meetings in private houses, to influence their friends and schoolmates. I remember how I envied some of them. There were two or three whose faces were bright, and who seemed moved with the joy of their new faith, who told us they were never so happy in their lives, and urged us unceasingly to pass through the same great change. But how? I supposed that, first, I must experience some remarkable conviction of sin, that I must feel that I had been very wicked; and that in some marvellous moment would come a sense of forgiveness, and light and joy. I was told that there were two kinds of sin, — original, that inherited from Adam, and that which was the result of our own personal action. But I could not, try as I would, feel myself guilty in either way. I could feel sorry for Adam; but I could not feel sorry for his sin in the sense of its having anything to do with me, try as I might. And I am afraid, along with my sorrow, there was a sense of admiration. It seemed to me a grand thing in Adam that he did not let Eve bear the punishment alone, but that he decided to take his chances along with her. Nor could I feel very guilty about my own sins; for I could not see what they could be. I had tried all my life not to be a sinner. I think there may have been a little spiritual pride about it. I looked about among my schoolmates, and thought, if I were like certain of them, I could feel guilty; for they seemed to be anything but model boys. But I had tried to live a right life; and I found it difficult to experience this sense of guilt.

But one night I came home from prayer-meeting late. Every one but myself had gone to sleep; and I was alone in the old country farm-house. There was a bright winter moon, and no need of light except that which streamed in at the windows. There was no fire except in the farm-house kitchen. Here I sat down, and made up my mind that I would not leave that room until I had, as I said, given myself to God. So I knelt in prayer, and told God that I would not cease praying till he came to my relief. A change of feeling did come over me; and I believed myself pardoned, and a great joy was in my heart. And I went to bed that night, *for the first time in my life*, feeling the assurance that, if I did not wake up in the morning, I had some chance of finding myself in the bright, eternal city of the blessed.

This joy lasted for a few days; and then a great change came over me,— perhaps only a nervous reaction, as a result of the strain I had been going through. But I found myself depressed and in great doubt. I was in doubt whether, after all, this experience had been genuine. I had heard it preached over and over again that a large number of those persons who thought that they were converted were mistaken, that there were few only who would be saved. And so I began to torment myself with the thought that probably I was not one of the chosen, and that my experience had been spurious. I look back at myself with pity, as I review the weeks that followed. Night after night,— I was only thirteen years old,— I lay down upon a pillow wet with my tears, rising frequently to pray, finding no relief, and at last sinking to sleep in sheer despair, trying to reawaken the confidence of my having been accepted with God. It did not come. Friends, father, mother, brother, and ministers all tried to help me, but in vain. At last, I gave it up, thinking I had done all I could, and that perhaps the experience was

genuine. Along with many others, I then became a member of the Congregational church. I stood by and heard the creed read, almost no part of which did I understand. No one had made the attempt to make me understand it. No one had gone over it with me. I was expected to accept it in this public manner; and I did so.

As I grew older, the question of my after course in life came up. I can remember, when the stage came in,— for the cars did not run to our village then,— being fascinated with this glimpse of life from another world; and I thought that nothing could be finer than to be a stage-driver. I was also interested in the work of the blacksmith and the shoemaker, and thought that here were careers good for any man. But, as I grew older, I do not remember when I did not expect to be a minister. When I went to the missionary concert, and saw the maps of the heathen lands and heard the appeals made in their behalf, I felt that probably I should become a missionary to the heathen.

During this time, I had my first experience of scepticism. There was a young man, a student from Bowdoin College, who used to come to our village, and who was pointed out to me as a man who did not believe in the reality of the story of Adam and Eve in the garden; and I remember I looked at him with a sort of horror, and wondered how any one so wicked was permitted to live. Perhaps I thought of that story of Paul on the Island of Melita, where the viper came out and fastened on his hand, and those that looked on expected the judgment of God to visit him for his sins. It never occurred to me that this young man might be wiser than any of us, and thus have a basis for his doubt.

When I went to the theological seminary, I was still firmly grounded in my belief; and, while there, it never occurred to me, from anything that teachers said to us, that we were

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freely to discuss the great problems of religion. We were taught to accept them without question. We were treated as though we were religious cadets at a theological West Point,— not seekers after truth, but persons to be trained in the belief that such and such things were so, and that we were to be ready to go out and fight for them against the world.

That was the type of religious training through which I passed in fitting for the ministry. I have been asked many times why, if these modern ideas are true, the ministers trained in the old faith are not more ready to accept them. When I look back to the kind of training through which I went, the answer is plain enough : they are taught not to be fearless truth-seekers, but to accept certain things as true, and to defend them against the world,— an attitude the most utterly incompatible with the free consideration of great themes and the acceptance of light from any quarter from which it may come.

When I left the seminary, instead of settling in some quiet country town, I was desirous of seeing something of pioneer life, of doing some missionary work, of standing on my own feet, of going to some place where a minister was merely a man, and where he must make his own way on the basis of what he could say and do. So I took a commission from the Home Missionary Society, and went to California, and began my work by preaching in a school-house. Through the three years that I was there, I was still earnest in the old belief, and for some time engaged with the evangelist, Mr. Earle, in revival work. No question of the reality of these beliefs ever entered my mind in any serious fashion. I almost regretted leaving New England; for I regarded the Unitarian heresy as so serious a matter that I wanted to be on the field, that I might fight it.

Family matters brought me back again. On my return, I preached in the Shawmut and Park Street churches, where, I presume, I should hardly be welcome at the present time. I needed at that time to make a home, not only for myself, but for my father and mother, who were old; and I settled in Framingham. There I first came in contact with Unitarianism. But what I saw and knew of it, through the conversations I had with a friend who had been a Unitarian clergyman, only set me more and more against it. This put me in a position of antagonism, making me feel that here was a battle to be fought.

To one incident there, however, I trace a beginning of the larger results that followed. For the first time, while living in Framingham, I read a tract against future punishment. It was written by Dr. Bellows; and, oh, how my heart longed to believe it! How I longed to accept this great hope for all mankind! But I was afraid. I did not dare trust myself to this feeling, lest I should be led astray, and endanger not only my own soul, but the souls of others. Becoming restless in the quiet, old settled town of Framingham, after the stirring missionary work of California, I determined to go West, and, out of two calls, accepted one to Hannibal, Mo. During the three and a half years there was fought out the great battle that constituted the turning-point of my life. Here I began to doubt some of the main points of the old theology. As I looked over my church and at those outside of it, I began to question as to what were the fundamental distinctions between those out and those in. So far as I could see, my religious theories did not work practically, as I applied them to men and women. The men outside ought to have been worse, and the men inside ought to have been better. I could not tell wherein consisted the distinction. I knew many a man

and woman outside who were unspeakably better than some of the church members. Then I was haunted by the memories of this desire to have some larger and better hope for men. My heart began to revolt against what seemed the cruelty, the injustice, and partiality of the divine government. I began to question whether it could be justice and goodness and love in a God who gave light to only a few of his children, and left the great masses of the world to wander in darkness and to perish.

Then I began to doubt and question whether the Bible, which was the fundamental basis of the old belief, was as infallible as it had been claimed to be. So I began anew the study of the Scriptures, trying to find out their origin, their nature, their authority, what claim they had on the human heart and conscience. During this time, I read many books written by liberal divines. Among these, the one which influenced me most, and that I remember with peculiar distinctness, was James Freeman Clarke's *Orthodoxy: Its Truths and Errors.* I began also a study of science; and one of the principal charges brought against me, when I began to be suspected of being a heretic, was that I had too many scientific books in my library. This was supposed in itself to constitute an accusation against the soundness of my faith.

Change then began, and grew apace; and, as the result of this scientific study, I became a firm believer in the general theory of evolution. While still in the orthodox church, I read a paper on Darwinianism, accepting and defending it from first to last. But I had not outgrown the folly of trying to reconcile it with Genesis,—as though any truth were not true, whether or not it agreed with something said thousands of years ago! I soon became known as a man somewhat dangerous and unsound in the faith.

I congratulate you who can sit quietly in your pews through these transition times. You have little idea of what it means to one who occupies a pulpit, one who cannot sit still and brood until the changing, ripening process is complete, one who, out of the confusion of brain, out of the aching heart, out of the questioning as to what is true, what must be said or left unsaid, is still compelled, every week of his life, to face a waiting audience and discuss these great themes of life and death. The pain sometimes came to be almost unbearable. There were long and weary months when I believe I would have been glad to lie down and fall into an unwaking sleep, only to escape this terrible struggle. One thing, however, I can say. During that long time, I did not preach anything which I did not believe, though it was perpetually charged against me that I did not preach a great many things which I ought to believe, which I ought to have preached. It was the omissions that were the principal charges brought against me during those months and years.

As I review this experience, I am obliged to think very tenderly of other ministers who are going through these transitions. It is very easy to say such a man of liberal tendencies ought to see his way clearly, that he ought not to stay where he is. It is easy to make such charges against men. But it is very difficult, when one is in the midst of this confusion, feeling his way, oppressed with the responsibility that is laid on him, not only for his own soul, but for the souls of others, to see the path which he ought to take. I became perfectly conscious of the fact that I was no longer orthodox, in the proper sense of that word; but I did not know, with any clearness, whether there was a church on earth to which I could honestly belong or any pulpit in which I could honestly speak my word. So let me

bespeak your charity, then, for those ministers that are passing through these transitions. Remember that it is easier to see and know after it has become perfectly clear than it is to comprehend when you are in the midst of the confusion of changing thought or when you are clouded over by fear as to the possible consequences of your action.

At this time, two or three things occurred which threw a strong light upon the theological condition of the Church at that time. In spite of the fact that I had become a pronounced, out-and-out heretic, and that two or three persons had become strongly opposed to me, when it came to my leaving, even my enemies begged me to remain. At that time, I was called to two other orthodox churches, both of which earnestly tendered the call, although they knew of my heresies. There were two orthodox doctors of divinity in Chicago, who, after a long and free conversation with me, said, "You ought to have stayed in, and helped us fight it out on the inside." But I came to believe that this was not an honest course to follow.

One other incident I will mention to show the condition of thought in the orthodox body. I published my first book while I was in Missouri, in the orthodox church. The papers, East and West, indorsed its position, and gave it more generous praise than I dared to hope for. I republished it the first year of my residence in this city, from the same plates, without the change of a sentence, word, or even punctuation point; and, suddenly, these same papers discovered that it was a very dangerous book. This showed that it was a very different thing to speak from the platform of a Congregational and that of a Unitarian church.

I came at last to feel that honesty demanded that I should carry in the sight of the world the colors under which I proposed to fight. I have no "railing accusation" to bring

against those men who, holding liberal ideas, propose to stay in, and fight it out on the inside. They may see a way to do it honestly. I cannot. It seemed to me very much like a member of the Democratic party secretly working in favor of the Republicans, or like a soldier wearing the uniform of one army and secretly opposing those with whom he professed to be in sympathy.

It seemed to me, therefore, that I must come out and stand where I was understood. Though those who listened to me from Sunday to Sunday found no fault with my sayings, I knew that they only partly understood the implications of the position which I was taking and defending. I felt perfectly sure that, if they did know, they would not be thus cordial. I determined, then, to come out, and occupy a position where I could be perfectly open and free. I was invited to the Third Unitarian Church in Chicago. Up to this time, I had never stood in a Unitarian pulpit. The first Sunday I did so stand, I stood in my own, preaching my first free sermon in my own free pulpit. When they asked me to become their minister, I told them frankly that I did not know whether I was a Unitarian or not, and I did not care much, but I knew I could not stay longer where I had been. If they were willing to give me an opportunity to study and think freely and to preach what I earnestly believed, whether it might be labelled by one title or by another, then I would accept. On those terms, they did accept me; and I began my work as a Unitarian.

Now, dropping this personal part, I wish to sum up some of the principal steps which I took, which all men take, in leaving the old beliefs and coming into the new.

One of the first steps is the revolt of the heart against this old conception of God, against this old method of governing the universe,— the feeling that it is unjust, that it is partial,

that it is cruel, that it is not like a Father, and that, if God be our Father, then this cannot be true.

Next comes a new study of the Scriptures, to see whether they be divinely inspired in a sense to make them infallible. And the careful, free study of the Bible discovers it to be a human production from first to last, the natural outgrowth of the religious nature of man,—beginning in barbarism, as humanity began; ending in those grand glimpses of the eternal future which are so beautifully outlined and illustrated in some of the higher and finer words of Jesus.

Then there comes this scientific study of the world, this new theory of the universe, of God, of man, of destiny. What do we find here? We find not this tiny world of the Mosaic cosmology, with God sitting outside, ruling it as a despot rules his kingdom: we find an infinite universe, and that God, if he be anywhere, is the life and soul and heart of the universe itself. And we find that man, instead of having been created perfect six thousand years ago, and having fallen from that perfect state, and so needing to be redeemed in the theological sense of that term, began close on the border of the animal world,—that there has been no fall.

Note the result of this. The whole theological scheme of Christendom rests on the foundation of the doctrine of the fall of man. There follows from that an infallible revelation given by miracle, confirmed by miracle,—the necessity of an infallible church to hold this revelation as in a sacred depository, and to interpret it for the benefit of man. Third, the necessity of an incarnation of the Son of God to work atonement through his suffering and death for those that believe and so are sharers in the benefits of that atonement. There follows of necessity on this old basis of belief an eternal heaven for those that accept the salvation and

of necessity a belief in an eternal hell for those who do not. This scheme is perfectly logical and consistent from beginning to end. It springs out of and rests on the doctrine of the fall. If there be no fall, then there is no need of any miraculous revelation; no need of any infallible church, no need of God's coming down to the world to be a man, living and suffering and dying; and the doctrine of the future destiny of the race is entirely transformed.

As the result of the study of modern science, this belief in the fall of man dissolves as a dream dissolves when a man awakes.

After going through this process of thought, one finds himself in a new world. The old theological scheme belonged to the old universe. In this new universe which evolution has revealed to us, there is no place for one single essential doctrine of the old theology. It fades away as the mists fade from the sides of the mountains when the sun is up, when the world stands out clear. I feel sometimes as if I had waked up from a dream. You know that grotesque and irrational things seem perfectly natural and logical in dreams, because you are in the dream-world. But, when the morning comes and the light shines into the easterly windows, you rub your eyes, and say, It is impossible that I should now look upon things as I did when I was in the dream. I feel sometimes as though, in emerging from this old belief, I had come from an underground cavern where everything was dim twilight, and only shadows could be seen, but that now I am up under the blue sky, in the breezy world where the sun is shining, where I hear the birds sing in the trees, and listen to the far-off music of the waters. This seems a real world.

My friends say to me now and then, those who were my friends in the old time, and are personal friends still, "You

have given up the old beliefs, but you have nothing to take their place." I have given them up, thank God,— all those old beliefs. But what did I give up? I gave up belief in a cruel, partial, imperfect God. I gave up belief in a disastrously ruined and fallen world. I gave up belief in the total depravity of man. I gave up belief in miracles. I gave up belief in a miraculous, divine incarnation, and in the suffering and death of God. I gave up belief in endless hell.

And what have I in place of these? I have an infinite, perfect, loving God. I have a world that has not been the scene of any disaster or ruin, but has been simply one line of orderly law and progress from the first. I have a humanity having begun, indeed, very low down, but having climbed up to the point where we can say, "Now are we the sons of God." I have a belief not in a special, miraculous, impossible incarnation of God in one man eighteen hundred years ago, but in the divineness of all men, in the immanence of God in every heart, in every brain, in all the race from the beginning until the end. I have a belief in an eternal hope, —not that all men will be perfect when they die, but that there is the same God, the same love, the same light, the same possibility, in all worlds and all ages. Given up? Yes! Given up darkness, given up doubt, given up fear, given up horror and despair, and found—life and light and joy and peace and hope for evermore!

WHAT LIGHT HAVE WE TO GUIDE US?

I HAVE already taken you over one of the several paths that lead from the old universe into the new one; and I have told you that in succeeding sermons it was my purpose to raise and answer the question, What trustworthy beliefs are still left to us? We have given up many of the main points of what is called the old faith. Have we lost or have we gained? Is going from the old world into the new progress or retrogression? But preliminary to this, and necessary by way of preparation for the answer to these questions, is the one that I propose as our morning theme,— What light have we in this new world by which to guide our steps? We have given up many of those things which were regarded as lights, lamps, candles, by which human pilgrims have been directing their steps in the ages of the past: what have we left by which to guide our feet to-day?

All the old religions of the world have claimed that they had some supernatural, some infallible guidance; that they were not in doubt in regard to any of the main questions of religious belief and practice. Priest or church, oracle or book, whatever it has been, they have advanced and held to the claim that they had some secret way of access to the council of the gods, so that there have been persons or hierarchies, organizations, institutions, bibles, set up above the ordinary level of humanity, and regarded as beacons by which the ships of humanity were to sail on their

quests after truth, after happiness, after life. If you go among barbarous tribes, you will find that this belief has been held by them no less strongly than by those more civilized. Perhaps it is even true that the lower you go in the scale of civilization, the more confidence of certainty do you discover. Among our North American aborigines, there has always been the medicine man, some one who has gained an ascendency over the people, some one who has claimed to be in the secrets of the invisible powers that held the destiny of the tribe in their hands, some one who could find out what they wished to have done, and communicate it to the people. And so in every tribe on all the face of the earth you find some religious authority, some one claiming infallible insight or information as to what the people ought to believe and do, how and when they ought to accomplish certain things demanded at their hands.

Among the ancient Greeks there were oracles, the oracle at Delphi and the oracle at Dodona. In the one case, the mysterious vapor rising from a subterranean cave was supposed to be the source of the divine inspiration, so that the priestess who was under its influence would utter the wisdom of the god who presided over the temple. At Dodona, those gifted with power to interpret were supposed to listen to the rustling of the leaves on the sacred oak, and so to gain a knowledge of the will of the deity to whom this oak was sacred. In Rome there were soothsayers and diviners, who watched the flight of certain sacred birds, the movements of certain sacred animals, who examined the entrails, the vital parts, of sacrifices, and in this way claimed to interpret the will of the gods. Among the Hebrews, the priests claimed that, in the use of the sacred instruments, the Urim and the Thummim, they could find out the will of Jehovah. And among the early Christians the belief was no less strong;

for, when it came to the case of electing some one to make complete the number of the twelve apostles after the fall of Judas, they chose two, and then, after having prayed, they cast lots, in the sure confidence that God would direct this casting of the lot. And, when it fell upon Matthias, they supposed that they had an infallible intimation as to the will of God in the matter. Even to-day, when it comes to the choosing of a new pope, the college of cardinals, after fasting and praying and going through religious ceremonials of one kind and another, claim to have perfect confidence that, when they come to the voting, there will be such a divine influence moving in the hearts and working on the minds of the members of the college that their choice shall only be registering that which has already been made in heaven. To be sure, this confidence does not preclude the possibility or the fact of a great deal of lobbying, of log-rolling, of what seem like political methods, in the attempt to obtain the position or secure the election of a favorite candidate. But it is easy enough to get over all this, and to say that God rules even among the passions of men, and so he thus registers his unchangeable will. So it is true, as I have said, that in all the religions of the world men have claimed some infallible guidance, a light whose beams never led astray.

There are, however, only two forms of this faith with which we need specially concern ourselves this morning. There are two claims as wide as Christendom which we have rejected, but which are so important, and which so divide between them the allegiance of the great Christian world, that we cannot pass them over without at least some brief review.

In the Catholic world, it is claimed that God's Spirit so resides and works in and through the Church that, where it

delivers its opinion as to a matter of faith, either through an œcumenical council or through the lips of the pope, it is the infallible truth of God. The Protestant world, of course, rejects this claim, and, instead of it, points to its Book. It says the Church, the council, the pope, are fallible, and make mistakes; but the Book at least is a transcript of divine, unchangeable, eternal truth.

Now let us consider this subject for a little, and see where we stand in regard to these two great claims.

In the first place, I am willing to confess for one that I would like very much indeed, as I think of it in some ways, to have some infallible guidance. Mr. Huxley not long ago, in discussing the question whether men were free or whether they were under some compulsion, whether their actions and even their thoughts were automatic, went so far as to say that he would be willing, for his part, to be an automaton, if he could only be absolutely certain that the mechanism would always work right and produce perfect results. So it seems very desirable to have some sort of infallible guidance in regard to these great matters of the religious life. And yet, as I think of it a little more carefully, I am not quite so certain as to its desirability; for, as a matter of fact, those who have claimed this infallible guidance in the past have never been able to understand their guide in precisely the same way, so that the practical result of it has not been any certainty of being guided right. There have been all sorts of parties, discussions, disputes, in regard to the guidance of the Church. And, when we come to the matter of the Bible, do we not know, as we look over Christendom, that it is all split up into little, bitter, warring, antagonistic sects and parties, divided simply on the question as to what the infallible guide really says? All that claim to have infallible guidance, therefore, are not walking in the same path; they

do not understand the voice of this infallible guide in the same way; so that, practically, it does not work very well.

If you stop to think of it for a moment, you will see that there is either some defect in the human mind or else some defect in language. It is simply impossible to have any form of words framed that shall bear precisely the same meaning to every human mind. The Constitution of the United States of America is a very plain document apparently: it is not full of figures, or poetry, or imagery, or phrases that may be interpreted this way or that. The framers intended, at any rate, to make it as plain as a guide-board at a country cross-roads. Yet scholars, statesmen, diplomats, politicians, ever since it was framed, have been quarrelling over the meaning of some of its apparently plainest phrases.

Again, those who have claimed to have this infallible guidance have developed spiritual conceit, spiritual pride: they have been taught to look upon themselves as peculiar selected people, chosen out of the great mass of the world by the peculiar favor of God, and set apart for the reception of his special grace. It has cultivated and developed certain qualities and characteristics of mind and heart that are not desirable, and that do not lift men in reality, in spiritual grade of being, above their fellows. It has developed hardness of heart, cruelty, persecution, and has led to all sorts of divisions, wars, bloodshed, and some of the most disastrous results, some of the greatest horrors, that are recorded in history.

Then, again, if one claims to have an infallible guide and it be not really infallible, you see the evil that must result. Only the other day, the captain of one of our great Cunard steamships came on our coast in a fog, not having been able to see the sun or to make his observations for several days.

The great trouble of it all, and that which led to the disaster, was his confidence that, in spite of the difficulties through which he had passed, he thought he knew more about the coast and the situation of things than he actually did. If he had doubted a little more, if he had had a little less confidence and so a little more caution, he might not have been so sure that the south shore of Boston Harbor was the north, and so have kept his ship off the coast. It would have been better to doubt and wait until he knew. So, in any direction, when men think they know more than they actually do, this confidence is not a guide into safe paths, but will certainly lead them astray.

Let us look then for a moment at the great guides of the world in the past, and note some illustrations of the results of mankind's following them. What has been the result of the claim of the infallibility of the Church? As a matter of fact, recorded in history, the main development of an infallible church, the Church of Rome, has gone wrong on almost every namable question which has been up for practical settlement. It went wrong as to the geography of the earth, claiming to know and opposing those who proposed to investigate and dared to doubt, persecuting them, hurling against them the lightning of divine wrath, threatening with penalties unending in the future. And yet, at every single point, the Church was wrong. Then, when you come to matters of astronomy, through how many hundreds of years did the Church fight against this new science, and the proposal to change the conception of the world as to the relative position of this little earth of ours in the infinite universe of which it is such a tiny part. Here, again, the Church was all wrong in spite of its infallibility. And those who in the midst of difficulty were feeling their way, investigating, trying to discover some solid basis for their feet,—

these men were friends of God, and were trying to read some little fragment of God's real word. When we come to chemistry and physics, the same is true, the Church all wrong, the students, so far as they went, right, and reaching out in the right direction; the Church opposing, fighting, persecuting, hindering, until at last the infallible guide suffers ignominious defeat. Then, in political economy, the Church fighting for ages the taking of interest on money, for example, regarding it as a sin; against having a census taken, because David, forsooth, was reported to have been punished because he counted the number of his people and armies. In his day, this was looked on as an indication of distrust in God. So in anatomy, in medicine. It was ages before the world was permitted to study medicine in any rational way. We wonder sometimes that the doctors are not wiser than they are; but it is only within modern times that they have had any opportunity for free, untrammelled investigation. For ages, the Church did its best to hinder them. It declared that it was sacrilege to dissect the human body; but how else could one find out how it was made? It declared that it was sacrilege to inoculate for the prevention of small-pox, because it was interfering with God's judgment; that it was blasphemy to prevent suffering, by the use of an anæsthetic, in the case of child-birth, because it was interfering with God's judgment on woman on account of the fall. The infallible Church has always opposed every step of human progress, and, so far as it has been followed, has led men astray. Whatever progress has been made has been made in open revolt against this infallible leadership, and under the dictation and guidance of this poor human reason of ours.

When we come to the Bible, what then? The Bible starts in its very first chapter with false science,—the best

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science that any one knew at the time, but wrong, as every unbiassed scholar knows to-day. It starts with mistaken teaching in regard to the origin and nature of man, in regard to his character, in regard to his moral condition. The Bible is mistaken all the way through, almost from first to last, whenever it dares to teach a matter of history. The Bible is anything but infallible, especially in the older parts of it, in its ethics. It represents at the beginning the ethical conception of a barbaric people. It indicates the natural steps of human growth. It is merely the natural outcome and reflection of purely human and fallible conditions of thought and life. What then? In so far as men have followed either the Church or the Bible as being infallible guides, they have been continually liable to go into wrong paths, and fall into difficulties of every kind. Whether, then, we would like an infallible guide or not, whether it would be a good thing or not, we must frankly admit that we have none.

Again, let me say, and for another reason, grander perhaps than those which I have alluded to, that it may be more than a question whether the possession of an infallible guide be a desirable thing.

What is the most important part of our human life? It is that we, by the experiences through which we pass, become schooled, self-developed; that we grow; that our powers and faculties expand; that we become whatever it is possible for us to become. Now, if you put into the hands of people what they are led to believe is an infallible guide, do you not see how it necessarily takes away from them any reason for investigation; that it leads directly to stagnation, to lack of progress; that it hinders, restricts, cripples?

One of the wisest things that was ever said, quoted many

times and misunderstood many times, because not read in the light of this thought, is that famous saying of Lessing's, — I quote not the words, but the thought,— If God should hold out to me in one hand perfect infallible truth, and in the other the privilege of seeking for truth, I would reply, O God, truth is for Thee alone; give me the joy and the labor of seeking for it.

Suppose a boy is struggling over a problem in arithmetic on first entering school, what will you do with him? It would please him at the time, be a great gratification, save him a vast amount of trouble, if you would show him the process and result, or at any rate give him the correct answer to his question. But suppose, on the other hand, you let him labor over this problem, even to heavy heart-ache and tears; suppose, after a long struggle, he is able to reach only a partially correct answer: even then is he not unspeakably better off than the other boy, to whom you have given the answer outright, and who has not been permitted to go through the pain, the effort, the growth, that comes in the process of solving the question? So the men and women who struggle with these great problems of the universe, and get only a partially correct answer, are unspeakably better off, if they honestly, earnestly, faithfully attempt to find it out, than they would have been if some infallible guide had lifted them in his arms, and saved them all the trouble and toil of the journey. For, when they had reached the truth in the latter case, they would have been puny and half-developed. In the other case, they have only partially found the truth; but they have grown strong, they have broadened, deepened, heightened, been made mighty, by the search.

Here we are, then, in this new world, without any infallible guide; and yet note one thing. When the world changed its thought from the old Ptolemaic to the Copernican con-

ception of the universe, not one single star was put out, not one light was even dimmed. They shone with all their old-time lustre; nay, the number of them discovered and added to that wonder-sky of human thought is almost uncounted. So, when we go out of the old universe into the new one, we lose none of the lights which were lights by which the men of old guided their feet: not one single star of ethics, of religion, of science, of human thought of any kind, has dimmed its ray. Every real light shines with its old-time lustre; and, now that we are free to seek, we are finding new stars in every development of human thought. We are perpetually told that we have given up old guides and have none left, that we are all at sea, that we are wandering in a wilderness, that we do not know where we came from nor where we are going nor what the journey is for; while they who thus taunt us assume that they have all these problems clearly settled, and that we are thus in danger of being lost, because we are not willing to take them on board as pilots.

Let us see what our condition really is, whether it is so very dangerous, after all. What are the things in doubt? What are the things concerning which we have practical certainty? I wish to answer this question by one general statement, of which a few particulars that I shall add will be illustrations.

We are not in doubt as to any one single, great, important, practical truth,— not one. The things we are in doubt about are almost entirely speculative,— things that it would be rather pleasant to know, that it would satisfy our curiosity to understand, but that are not necessary as guides for life.

We do not know with absolute certainty about the origin of this solar system,— how old it is, where it came from, by just what process. We have our theories, and think they are probably correct; but we cannot say with certainty. But what of it? What difference does it make? Is it a practical

question? We have the solid earth under our feet, the blue sky in the day-time over our heads, and the infinite, alluring vista of stars at night. No matter where they came from, they are here; and they are what they are, and we stand in certain definite relations to them. We are learning more and more of those physical forces by which we are surrounded and of which we are a part. We are learning more and more to comprehend and control them. We are bringing them so under control that they are ready to come and go at our bidding.

As one specific illustration, no man is able to answer the question, What is electricity? It is an infinite mystery, as much so as the question, What is God? But we know enough about the working of this mysterious power to guard ourselves against the flashes of lightning. We know enough about it to make it run round the world on our errands, to bring us next door to the farthest points on the planet. We do not know very much about ourselves. No man knows precisely the origin of man,—his nature, how it is that the mind is connected with the body, its dependence on the brain, the mystery of consciousness. These things are as insoluble to-day, so far as we can see, as they ever were. But what of it? There is no doubt about the fact that we are conscious, that we are living, that we have minds, that we think, that we feel, that we hope, that we fear, that we know, that we are ignorant. There is no sort of practical doubt as to the great questions of the relationship which we ought to maintain toward each other as persons, friends, in the family, in society, in the State. Only let us live out what we know, and the kingdom of God would come to-morrow.

How is it about God? You can mystify any man by asking him a question or two about the Divine. There are

any number of problems that cannot be solved; but they are all on the speculative side. We do not know where God was or what he was doing before this solar system came into being. We do not know very much about the different personalities that have played so large a part in theological speculation. Nobody knows about these things except a few people in the Orthodox Church, who have got it all down in their creeds. But these are purely speculative matters. That there is an infinite Power, who was before we were, who will be when we have passed away, who holds us in his arms, "in whom we live and move and have our being," who surrounds us on every hand, on a knowledge of and obedience to whose laws depend life, happiness, well-being,—all these things that touch us, that are practical, are not in doubt.

Then, once more, in regard to destiny. There is no end of speculation as to what lies beyond that curtain that shuts down before us, before which we stand so many hours listening, which we try to lift, to gain a glimpse of the farther side. But what of that? Under the guidance of the light of the law of cause and effect, we know the relation of yesterday to to-day, and of to-day to to-morrow. We know that the past has made the present; and that the present is making the future; and that we have the power to modify in some degree the present, so as to make the future different from what it would be but for that modification. All that is practical, then, we know. Not a shadow of doubt rests upon it. Therefore, I reiterate that which I said; and they who talk about not knowing anything, not believing anything, are thoughtless, and do themselves huge injustice, and those outside who taunt us with not knowing anything, not being certain of anything, not believing anything, are guilty either of ignorance or slander. We know all that we

need to know to make our lives grand and sublime, to redeem the present and to create a future.

Finally, let me give some specific statements by way of reply to the question with which we began. What light have we in this new world to guide us? Here, again, let me give one general statement, which will include all the particulars that will follow. We have all the light there is, all the light that anybody has. Nay, more. If there be some little sect, party, denomination, that shuts itself in some one room of God's many-mansioned house, draws the curtains at the windows, locks every door, and stops every keyhole, lest a glimpse of light should come in from some other room, and takes only for light and guidance that which it can see in this particular apartment, instead of having more light than we have, it has less; for it has the light only of one room, while we have it all. We have not only the light which the Protestant has,— and we have all the light which the Protestant has,— but we have whatever light the Catholic has besides. We have all the light of the Christian, undimmed; and, if there be any light that God has shed on any other part of the world, that, too, is as free to us as that which shines from Judea. Whatever light in any star or heaven shines on any country on the globe, that light is free and open to us, to use unprejudiced in guiding our feet aright.

We have, then, as particulars under this : —

1. All the light of all the saints, prophets, religious teachers, of the world. Whatever they have been able to catch of the eternal truth and to reflect for the enlightening of the world is open to us to investigate and use.

2. We have all the light of all the Bibles of the world. You would wofully misunderstand and misrepresent my meaning, if you should suppose that I have intended to say one word derogatory to our Bible. Not the Bible ought

we to speak against. For the sake of the Bible, and for the sake of the rational use of it, we should speak and fight forever against the misinterpretation, the false use, and the false claims that put it beyond our reasonable use. The Bible is the noblest body of religious literature that can be found in any one collection under heaven. No sane critic has ever for one moment questioned this; but it is not infallible. It simply represents the best religious life and the highest religious inspiration of the time when its several parts were written. We have this Bible, then, in all that it is and all that it can do for us; and we have all the Bibles of all the other races, which, though lesser lights, are still lights. There are times in this world when a candle is of much more service than an electric light; and so some dimmer ray of truth may, for particular uses and occasions, be better for us than the glory of the noon-day sun.

3. We have all the light of all the discoverers, all the inventors, all the truth-seekers, all the scientific investigators of all nations and all times. The results of their labors are open for our use.

4. We have the results of all the experience of humanity. This experience it is which, uttered by seers or written in Bibles or as part of the scientific investigation of the world, rightly used, is the great light of the world. Men found out what conditions were helpful for them to live in by experience, what articles of food were good for them to eat by experience; they found what plants, herbs, minerals, might be serviceable for medicine, how best to live together in families, how to secure the highest type of society, how to establish the best political organization,—all these things were learned by experience; and the only reason why men are going perpetually astray is that they have no knowledge of this experience of the past. Every little while, you will

hear of some brand-new reform in political economy or some patent method for rejuvenating the world; but, if the framer had known a little something of human history, he would have known that the same old panacea had been tried over and over again. There is enough light in human experience, only we need to know where it is, to be educated, enlightened, as to its results.

5. We have that which I know not how rightly to characterize, but which we sum up under the name of *the ideal.* What is this ideal? Is it the outshining of the face of God looking at us through the dim mists of the future? Is it the first rays shooting up over the globe of the future of a yet unrisen sun, heralding a new dawn and a better day? What is this ideal, this dream, this vision, this foregleam of something better than has ever been, that shines with "a light that never was on sea or land"? We may not know, but yet this we may know: that this ideal is a light for the guidance of the world; and that, wherever there has been progress in political economy, in sociology, in science, in literature, in art, in religion, it has been under the impulse of this ideal, this dream of something fairer than ever yet came down out of the sky.

There is light enough, then, for all our needs. It is not for lack of light that we go astray. It is only for lack of heeding the light we have. This light is growing and increasing every day, age by age; and we may rest in sure confidence that it will grow more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day.

RELIGION.

Out of the old universe into the new; that was our starting-point in this course of sermons. Then we raised and answered the question as to what light we had to guide us in this new world. After having given up the claimed infallibilities and authorities to which men have looked in the past, we asked what there was left for us. This morning, in the light which we found for our guidance, I ask you to go with me in this great search for religion. That is the first, the most pressing theme: it is fundamental to everything else that will follow. Have we religion left? If we are able to answer that question in the affirmative, then it will be pertinent, before I am through, to raise the further question as to the aim of religion in this modern world, as to what it is to continue to exist for, and what are some of the methods by which we are to seek this end.

This is no useless question; but it is one that is being debated very widely, both by those who hope and those who fear. Thousands hope that religion is to be outgrown. Other thousands fear it. And this fear, this lurking distrust, this lack of vital faith in God, manifests itself in the disquietude, in the anger, in the opposition, of those who are afraid to have the great problems of the world freely discussed, lest they should find out that, after all, the world is an illusion; that there is no real basis for their faith,—that faith which they claim has been delivered to them from the God of the universe himself.

There are several classes of persons who either hope or fear that religion has received its death-blow; that it is something which fitted well enough into the old crude universe of the past, but that it is not anything which belongs to the free, earnest thought of those who dare to look the world in the face, and receive without flinching the answers to their questions. The Orthodox Church naturally looks upon us who have rejected this claimed authority as irreligious. We ought not to wonder at this: it is only logical and consistent. Now and then, you find a liberal who wonders at the narrowness that does not allow the use of one of the old churches for a different type of service. Yet it is purely unreasonable that we should expect it. It means for them suicide, if they permit it. They believe that they have received by miracle an infallible revelation from the one only God of the universe, of the one only religion. This is the foundation on which they build their Church. And, if this be so, then, of course, he who rejects that revelation and that conception of religion rejects all the religion there is; for on that theory there can be but one. It is perfectly natural then, perfectly logical, perfectly consistent, that they should look upon us as without God and without hope in the world, and as having turned away from religion and gone out into a life that is secular, that is in the true sense of that word irreligious. This type of thinking is not confined to those who consistently stand by these old beliefs. There are those who call themselves liberal, who have accepted the results of modern investigation, who still keep in their minds as the one definition of religion that which belongs to the old, and which comes down to them by tradition. Religion to them is something apart from and outside the natural order of the world; and, just as fast as they cease to believe in any supernatural interfer-

ence in the order of nature, they are under the impression that religion is being done away.

I wish to call your attention to one type of this thought. Mr. Philip Gilbert Hamerton is a well-known writer on art and other subjects. In one of his later books, perhaps the last one, entitled *Human Intercourse*, there are two very interesting and suggestive chapters. One is entitled "How we are apparently becoming less Religious." The next one is, "How we are really becoming less Religious"; for he believes that we are ceasing to be religious, and are becoming secular. He gives one or two illustrations to show the kind of thought which he holds. He tells the story of the Athenian general, Nikias, who was besieging the city of Syracuse. The siege having failed, he was ready to retreat, but just about the time he was to give his orders there was an eclipse of the moon; and he consulted the soothsayers as to what it meant, thinking, no doubt, that this was some message from the gods. The priests told him that he must wait three times nine days before he raised the siege; that this was the will of the gods. Obedient to this, he stays there, his soldiers dying on every hand, he himself becoming more and more surrounded and enmeshed by the forces of the enemy, until his army is ruined; and the whole expedition ends most disastrously. This, according to Mr. Hamerton, is what it means to believe in religion; and he says the moment that we understand that the eclipse of the moon is a natural thing, that moment we cease to have any religious emotion as connected with anything of that sort. We henceforward look upon it as pure mechanism, as part of the natural order of the world. He tells another story of an escape from an accident on a railroad train. There was a priest on the train, who, just about the time of the crisis of the accident, uttered a prayer; and all those who be-

lieved with him in supernatural interference attributed the escape of the passengers to this prayer. He gives this as an illustration of the religious way of looking at the world. Those who had given up this idea treated this deliverance as natural, and accounted for it on scientific principles. These two points I have used to illustrate some modern theories as to what religion means. Religion with them is some outside supernatural interference with the order of nature ; and, if we cease to believe in that, we cease to be religious.

There is another type of thought somewhat akin to this, and yet different enough to call for separate mention. There are those, and perhaps the French philosopher and scientist Comte may be mentioned as the best example of them, who look upon the mythological ideas of the childhood of the world, and the religion founded upon them, as something to be outgrown; recognizing the fact, which of course no one thinks of denying, that, as fast as these people became intelligent, they have left this religion behind them. They carry this train of reasoning so far as to say that, as fast as the world becomes wiser, it outgrows one after another the religious theories and religious types of thought which belong to the cruder stage of civilization. The philosophy of these men has come to be a proverbial phrase,— that ignorance is the mother of devotion. If ignorance ceased, devotion would die along with it. Comte carried this thought so far as to say that, to the enlightened man, the heavens no longer declare the glory of God : they declare only the glory of the astronomers, Newton, Laplace, and their peers. Those who hold this idea feel that religion is only a misinterpretation of natural phenomena; and, as soon as people become wise, it will be outgrown and left behind.

Then there are thousands of people, not very well versed

perhaps in philosophy or science, yet with a smattering of these, who are accustomed to think that those persons who still remain religious are not quite so wise as the enlightened few, among whom, of course, they always include themselves, who have seen through the hollowness of it all. They are ready to treat it benevolently and gently as a phase of the childhood development of the world; but they look upon themselves as having outgrown it, as being beyond anything of that sort, as having dismissed all these conceptions of the universe.

Now, then, in order to find out whether these things are so, I propose to ask you to join with me in a serious examination of a few of the varied types of religious thought, feeling, and life developed in the course of human history, and see if we can find out what is the essential thing in this matter of religion and what is only dress and accident. In this way, perhaps, we shall be able to answer the question, Is religion something to be outgrown and left behind as humanity advances?

Let us take at the outset one of the crudest and lowest types of religion with which we are acquainted. We will begin with the fetich worshipper, the barbaric man who in some curious way, we cannot stop to examine how or why, has come to reverence a stone or stick, a serpent, toad, or tree, no matter what. He has come to look upon them as the residence of some mysterious spirit or power of which he stands in awe. He believes that in this stick or stone or toad is a power invisible and mighty; one that can hurt him if he does not keep on the right side of it; one that can help him, if he can win its favor; one that wants certain things of him; one that would like to be fed, perhaps, or to have a sacrifice offered, or prayers made, or some especial honor paid to it; that would like to be flattered, to be called by

high-sounding titles. Perhaps it may be the spirit of some dead chief within it; but, whatever it is, here is a mysterious, invisible power, and this fetich worshipper offers that power gifts, prays to it, praises it, adores it. Here is religion, here is worship, here are all the essentials of what we find in any higher type of life. Now what is this man doing? What does he think he is doing? He recognizes a power here which is not himself. He recognizes himself as standing in some sort of relation to that power. He has come in some way to believe that that power wants him to do certain things, and that, if he does these things, he will establish a better relationship between himself and that power than already exists. By better, I mean more advantageous. If the power is angry, he will appease it. If it loves him, he will gratify that love. He will placate its wrath, and win its favor. This is what the fetich worshipper tries to do.

Leave that, and come to a higher type. Stand with me in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, at the height of the glory of Israel's worship. The temple porch is thronged with those who have come from the different portions of the kingdom to attend one of the great festivals. The service is going on. The choir is chanting some of those great psalms that are still read as parts of our religious service. The sacrifice has been offered. The high-priest has entered the mysterious holy of holies, as he was accustomed to once a year, to perform the most important rite of their religion. When this is done, he comes out and blesses the people. They are hushed and bowed, and feel that somehow or other the favor of their God is brooding over them and giving them peace. Now, what are these people doing? What do they think they are doing? They recognize,—no longer associated with a stick or stone or serpent,—they recognize a power invisible, mysterious, mighty, that is not themselves.

They recognize themselves as standing in certain relations to this power. They believe this power wants them to do certain things, to feel in certain ways, to bring sacrifices, to offer praise, and that, in consideration of their doing this, they will establish better relations between themselves and this power, and win his favor. Here, again, better relationship means more advantageous relationships to themselves. Here you see, then, is only another type of what we saw in the case of the fetich worshipper.

Let us visit for a moment St. Peter's at Rome. The Jewish religion, so far as the domination of the civilized world is concerned, has passed away; and Christianity has taken its place. They are celebrating one of their great services in this magnificent cathedral. It is crowded with loving and reverent hearts. The priests enter, the host is lifted up, and the people fall on their knees in adoration. Perhaps the supreme pontiff is present, and blesses the waiting people. What have these people been doing? What do they think they are doing? Is it not clear that they are thinking of a mysterious, invisible power outside of themselves, that can help them, that can hurt them? They are thinking of themselves as standing in certain relations with this power. They believe that he wants them to do certain things, to cherish certain feelings, to hold certain faiths, and that, in consideration of their doing it, better relations, more advantageous, will be established between themselves and this power. They will be better off after the service than they were before. Is not here, again, essentially the same thing that we saw in Solomon's temple and in the fetich worshipper?

To give one more illustration. By a great leap down the centuries, let us come here to this service this morning. What are we here for in our simple service? What do we

think we are doing? I trust that you are here for some nobler purpose than merely to hear me speak. I certainly am here for something higher and nobler than to attempt your entertainment. Had I no deeper motive than that, this would be the last morning that I should ever stand here. You believe and I believe that this meeting, this service, has some sort of bearing on life; that we will be a little wiser, a little better, on account of it. You may call it whatever you will, but we recognize a power outside of ourselves, manifested in star, in street dust, in dewdrop, in flower. We recognize the power that encloses us around like the air, that is behind us, besetting us on every side, which is under us and over us, in which we live and move and have our being, out of which we have come, on which we depend every moment of our lives. We believe that we are standing in some sort of relation to this power, and believe that it is possible by study, by higher thoughts, nobler feelings, by living better, by studying the truth, by kindling our emotions, by this service, we shall become a little wiser, a little better, shall think more nobly, act more justly. We believe that in some way this service bears on this great question of getting into better, truer, higher relations with the infinite power that closes us around. If we do not believe it, then we are wasting our time by being here. Here, then, are the essentials that we found in St. Peter's, in Solomon's temple, in the actions of the fetich worshipper.

I wish to carry this out one step further. Let us take the case of Mr. Huxley and Mr. Spencer. They think, doubtless, that they have gone beyond us. I presume they are not regular attendants at any church. Perhaps this may be quite excusable. I have no judgment to pronounce on that subject. But they are agnostics. They claim to know nothing concerning God or concerning our possessing any soul.

Yet the one thing for which they live, that which they think about, that for which they are laboring and striving every moment of their lives, is to learn something more about the nature of this mysterious, infinite, invisible power that closes us around, that is not ourselves; that they may do what they can to establish better relations between humanity and this infinite power that works in and through the universe. Paul may call the work of religion reconciliation with God. Mr. Spencer may call it adjustment to one's environment; but the essential thing is here, all the essentials are here, which we find in our own case, in St. Peter's, in Solomon's temple, in the case of the fetich worshipper. Examine any type of religion you please, and you will find that the essential things in it are a recognition on the part of men of a power outside of them that is not themselves, that can help or hurt them, on which they are dependent; the recognition of certain relations existing between themselves and this power; and the further recognition that it is possible to improve these relations. There never existed a religion whose ultimate aim and end was not just this improvement of the relations which were supposed to exist between men and some power outside of themselves that was not themselves.

This is the object of all science. Science cannot escape it. Let a man call himself an atheist, and he does not escape it. He still recognizes this power manifested in the world, in the order of nature, and his own relation to this power; and he knows and will tell you that the only object of all life is to improve the relation which exists between himself and this power, no matter what name he gives it, whether he believes that it is personal or impersonal, conscious or unconscious, living or dead.

The essentials of religion then, from the fetich worshipper

to the highest conceivable human thought, are precisely the same and forever unchanging. You cannot conceive of their being changed or left behind. So long as there is a human being still capable of thinking and feeling, so long as man recognizes outside himself a power that is not himself, so long as he recognizes himself as standing in relation to this power, and the possibility of bettering that relation, of improving human life,—so long will the essential eternal principles of religion abide.

When people talk about religion's dying, you may always feel sure that they are talking about some particular type of religion, some theory, some theology. Let all the religions die, if you choose; let all the theories be forgotten; let all the theologies crumble into dust; let all Bibles be blotted out, even all memories of the past, so that there shall not even be any Buddhism, Confucianism, Parseeism, Christianity; let men even forget that there were ever any such forces in the universe,—and they would be under the absolute necessity of beginning a religious life the very next breath they drew; for religion is a part of the universe itself.

Now, then, we are ready to ask the question as to what the aim of religion must be among those who have accepted liberal thought.

Christianity throughout almost its entire history has made its one avowed aim to be to deliver humanity from sin and to secure its salvation in another world. The redemption of man from the results of the fall,—this has been the work of Christianity. Of course, we can no longer make that the point for which we are striving. We recognize no fall. We do not believe in the view of sin that has been held and taught by the old faith. We recognize evil and wrong, but not that which they call "sin." Redemption, then, from the result of this fall, cannot be the one thing we are striving after. What, then, is it? We recognize evil, suffering, dis-

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ease, crime, heart-break, all the sorrows that flesh is heir to. We recognize human imperfection, the possibility of personal and social growth. We dream of an ideal and perfect humanity. The one thing, then, after which we aim, is human deliverance from evil of every kind, and the attainment of human perfection. The one thing we seek is life, life in all its fulness, breadth, depth, height,— life, perfect life. This means salvation now from every conceivable form and type of evil. It means salvation forever, so long as life may continue.

Instead then of religion's having grown something thinner and less substantial, and being in danger of fading away, like the mists of the valley when the sun is high, we believe that religion is something so broad, so deep, so high, so inclusive, that nothing that touches the welfare and happiness of humanity is beyond its range. Religion, rightly defined, includes art, literature, music, science, government, sociology. It means life, fuller life. For what is art? Art is only an attempt to reconcile our broken thoughts about the beauty of the world with the perfect ideals of its beauty. It touches our sense of beauty with the reality of the infinite beauty, of which all our imperfect glimpses are but partial expressions. What is literature? Only an attempt to give fine, fitting, perfect expression to the highest dreams and thoughts and feelings of the world; that is, to reconcile our imperfect thought and feeling with the perfect thought of which we dream. What is music? Only our attempt to express the infinite harmony, to catch some strains of that perfect song that was heard when the morning stars sang together. What is science? Only our attempt to discover and utter some part of the infinite truth of things. What is government? Only our attempt to express in society some part of the divine order. What is sociology? Only our attempt to develop humanity in its relations into the ideal and perfect

man. All these things are only parts of this attempt at reconciliation, at adjustment,— attempts to better the relations in which we stand to this infinite life and power.

Consider a moment. When we as persons are completely reconciled within the limits of our own personality,— that is, when the body and the mind and the heart and the spirit are rightly related and adjusted to each other in perfect harmony, when the lower is subordinated to the higher,— then there is the perfect man or the perfect woman. They may grow larger, may carry out more fully the ideal that they have attained. And when in society there is perfect harmony, no longer any injustice, no longer any wrong, no longer any hate, but peace and brotherhood, then the perfect world, the perfect ideal of society, is attained. And, when the perfected individual and the perfect society are in perfect adjustment to all the forces in this infinite universe that closes us round and touches us on every hand, then we are reconciled to God, as Paul would phrase it; then we are perfectly religious. Religion is not outgrown even then. It has only come to perfect efflorescence, only reached the height of its true development.

Now, then, as to the methods. I have given you the aim of religion, broadly considered. By what methods shall we seek this end? How much, for example, of the mechanism of religion, as it has existed in the past, is antiquated and useless for our purpose to-day in the New World?

The answer to this question is that any method is justified which helps on the result. The methods may vary infinitely, according to the varying types of thought and feeling and character and development among men. Anything that helps us to attain the end of a perfected humanity is thereby justified as a religious method.

Three things we need to gain. We need to have true thought, right feeling, and right action in dealing with each

other. Thought, feeling, action, then are necessary; and so whatever helps to truer thought, to nobler feeling, whatever becomes a motive to better action in religion,—all these things are justified as methods of religious activity.

First and above all things, we need utter freedom of thought, in order that we may seek the truth untrammelled. Then we need whatever can touch, inspire, and uplift the emotions. Finally, we need anything that can become a motive to nobler living.

Let me touch on a few of these things that have been most intimately associated with the religious life of the past. The Church,—will that be outgrown? I think not. It will change its form. It will base itself on different foundations. It will moderate or change its claims. It will no longer claim the kind of authority which it has held in the past. But what is the association that we call the Church? It is a voluntary organization of persons having a common purpose. So long, then, as people are accustomed to organize in all other directions, why should it not be rational, and why should we not believe that it will continue to be practicable, for them to organize in religion? And such an organization is in all essentials a church.

Will worship remain? So long as men see anything above them to admire, to strive after, so long not only will they worship, but they do worship; precisely that is worship. The essence of worship is nothing else than admiration for something that men conceive to be above them. Worship, then, is a part of every true and noble man. No man ever yet made progress in any direction except under the impulse of worship. Worship is the glimpsing of the ideal and seeking its attainment.

What about religious teachers and founders? Will they be outgrown? Some of them. In so far as they caught sight of the eternal truth, and voiced it for man, in so far

they will remain leaders, inspirers, and teachers of humanity. Emerson has said that

> "One accent of the Holy Ghost
> The heedless world hath never lost."

So far as these men have caught the whispers of the Holy Ghost, so far they will remain serene guiding powers and leaders of human thought and feeling; and Jesus, I believe, above all,— not for any supernatural reason, but for the simple reason that he saw and uttered more of helpful, inspiring, eternal truth than any other religious founder.

Rituals, forms of service, holy days, holy places,— will they remain? In so far as these things are able to help man, as they are the manifestation of that which is vital in religious life, as they touch the heart, kindle the feelings, lift the soul, so far they will remain, and ought to remain.

Will the Bibles remain? The Bible of the modern world is not bound between any two covers. It is not any one book. We are free to take, not only that which is in our Bible, but that which is in any Bible. And whatever is a part of divine revelation, whatever is truth to the intellect, whatever is inspiration for the heart, whatever is a motive power for nobler action in all Bibles, in all writings, in all literatures,— these will constitute the sacred Scriptures of the religion of the coming age.

Religion, then, will remain. It will remain the grandest, noblest interest of humanity. When humanity becomes perfect, religion will not be antiquated. It will only be the perfect ideal of that which humanity has attained. It encloses us like the air we breathe. It is the sea on which we sail. When, then, some shipmaster can outsail his horizon, when some bird can fly beyond the limits of the air in which it finds the leverage for its wings, then we may think religion will be outgrown.

GOD.

In his famous essay on Atheism, Lord Bacon says, "A little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." It is a common cry at the present time that the tendency of modern thought is atheistic and infidel. This cry is raised by those who are afraid of modern thought, and also by a certain class of persons who suppose themselves to be in sympathy with it. The tendency is toward atheism, if you mean by that simply disbelief in certain old conceptions of God. But people forget that an idol may be made out of thoughts as well as out of silver, or gold, or wood. They forget that disbelief in idols, whether they are idols of the brain or the work of the hand, while atheistic to the worshippers of these idols, may be grandly theistic from the stand-point of the higher thought about the world. The tendency of modern thought is really atheistic on the part of a large number of shallow thinkers, those persons who possess a little philosophy, as Bacon says,—those who illustrate that line of Pope's, the thought of which was probably borrowed from Bacon,—"A little learning is a dangerous thing." But it seems to me that the tendency at the present time in the midst of these great revolutions through which we are passing is chiefly theistic, and that we are to come to a finer, nobler, deeper, higher conception of God than the world has ever dreamed of before. It will be my purpose this morning

to illustrate this statement so far as I am able in the time at my disposal.

In order that we may comprehend the drift of modern thinking, and that we may see that it is only growth,— not break, not reversal, not retrogression,— I need to take you back over ground that will be more or less familiar to you, and call attention to some of the thoughts of the early world about God, to show you how natural,— the world and man being what they were,— how inevitable, those thoughts were.

In order to understand the condition of the childhood world, we need by a process of imagination to blot out of existence all the learning, the culture, the literature, of the last ten, fifteen, twenty, perhaps fifty thousand years; and we need not only to blot out these results of human thought, but to remember that we must also diminish in our imagination the power of thought of the human brain, the result of which has been all this development of the world. For the brain of man has grown; and it is out of this growth of the brain that these higher and finer conceptions have sprung. The external institutions, the written thoughts, of the world, have always kept pace with the developing capacity of the human brain. As we go back, then, to this childhood condition of the world, it is perfectly natural that people then should have had their childish thoughts about themselves, about the universe, about the mysterious powers which they recognized about them, which they called gods and worshipped. It is perfectly natural that they should have thought of this power not as one, as we do to-day, but should have thought of powers uncounted. Wherever they saw the manifestation of force, there they recognized, and were compelled to by their mental condition, the manifestation of some individual power. The power in the sun was not to them the same power that is in the lightning, in the growth

of the blade of grass or the blush of the cheek. They had no such mental grasp of the universe as would enable them to think of it under this conception of unity. There were just as many mysterious powers as there were manifestations of force. But it would be perhaps a matter of accident as to which one of these powers they should pay their worship. Some local accident, some peculiar life experience, would determine that this particular man should worship what he would think of as the ghost of an ancestor or the mysterious force manifested in the lightning, the wind, a tree, or connected in his mind with an animal or a reptile. These were perfectly natural thoughts at that time, quite as natural as our higher conceptions in which we rejoice to-day. Fetichism, polytheism,— these grew out of the condition of things. But as there was social advance, as individuals coalesced into families, as families aggregated into tribes, and tribes grew into larger organizations called nations, so there went on a corresponding process of development in their thought about these mysterious powers; and some one of these powers came to be in their minds the one God, not of the world, but the one God of their people, the only supreme power in their religion, the one that claimed their allegiance, to whom they offered worship. This is the stage of human thought which Prof. Max Müller has called henotheism, a condition of the human mind in which there was not yet the belief in one God only, but the belief in one God for a particular tribe or people. We can illustrate this by the condition of the Hebrews during the early stages of their history. Jehovah was their God; but it never occurred to them to doubt the real existence of Dagon, the god of the Philistines, or Chemosh the God of the Moabites, or the different gods of the Egyptians. These were real gods; only, they were not their gods. They owed them no allegiance,

no worship: they looked upon them as enemies; and, when they went to war, it was not merely a question whether the Hebrews were stronger than the Philistines, but whether Jehovah was mightier than Dagon,— for the gods entered into the wars with the same earnestness as the people.

This process of growth, then, went on, and this stage was passed; and, by and by, it dawned upon the human mind that there could not be this multiplicity of gods, that God must be one. It is the supreme and eternal glory of the Hebrews to have been the first in the history of human thought to attain this grand conception of monotheism. They grew to believe that Jehovah was not only their god, but the only god of all the world. The prophets declared this, and preached it until they made it a common thought in the minds of the people that all the other gods of the world were but idols, empty names, having no real existence and no real power, to whom they need pay no worship, of whom they need stand in no fear.

It was a peculiarity of this Hebrew thought, unfortunately for us, as I think, that they conceived of this great God Jehovah as a God outside of and separate from nature, not living in their world, but set apart from it,— a despot ruling it from without, having created it, indeed; though, by some of them, even that was questioned. But they believed that it was created in such a way that it ran, like a piece of mechanism, by itself; while he stood in relation to it chiefly through miraculous interference to bring about certain results that would not be produced by the natural working of the great world-machine.

It is a peculiarity of Hindu and of Greek thought, a peculiarity quite necessary to nature worship, to believe that the gods were somehow involved and implicated in the nature of things. If they had manifested a sufficient grasp

of the world to have developed the thought of the unity of things, they would probably have come much nearer to our modern conception than did the Hebrews. They believed in nature worship in a thousand forms; but they never rose high enough to grasp the conception of the world's unity. So they could not give us a God such as we are seeking to-day, who is in and through and in a certain sense one with nature, its soul and its life.

When Christianity came, it became the religion of the civilized world; and we have inherited the results of its thought and its work. But Christianity inherited from the parent religion the belief in the infallibility of the Old Testament scriptures; and, along with it, they inherited this conception of God as a being outside of nature, apart from it, and separated so far from it that he was utterly unlike anything that we could naturaliy know,— that we must know him through mediators; that we could reach him only through miraculous processes. They recognized an impassable gulf that only miracle could bridge. This has been the dominant conception of God, taught so by theology in all ages since; but we are finding it impossible to believe in any such God as that. We have learned to think of nature as practically infinite. We cannot conceive any bounds or limitations, and we are recognizing the fact that to think of two infinities is absurd. If nature be infinite, then there is no place for an infinite beyond the bound of nature. Nature has no bounds. We are, then, face to face with this dilemma: that we must either believe in nature and cease believing in God or else we must believe in a God who is in and through nature, its life, its soul. We can no longer believe in a God who rules the world from without or interferes arbitrarily with natural processes. There is a great deal of confusion of thought in regard to this matter. I remember reading

some years ago an argument in favor of the old theory of the power of prayer; and the basis of it was that, since we can manipulate and use natural laws to produce results which they of themselves would not produce, as is manifestly true, we must presume that God would be able, also, to manipulate and use natural laws without interfering with them, without any miraculous break in their method or order. It is true that we can thus interfere without any breach of natural laws. We simply use forces in accordance with laws, and make them produce results which they would not have produced but for our interference. If we could admit the existence of invisible intelligences or spirits, it would be possible for them to manipulate natural forces, and produce results which would never have been produced but for such interference; and this would be no more breach of natural law than it is a breach of such law to lift a book or chair to change their situation. But the fallacy of the argument lies right here; and that is the reason why we cannot believe in a God separate from the nature of things. The nature of things is God. The forces of the universe are the thoughts of God, the pulsing of his life. What we call laws are nothing but the divine habits and methods of work. For God, then, to interfere with them is to interfere with himself, which is a contradiction, an absurdity. They are uniform and changeless, for the simple reason that, if there be infinite wisdom, infinite power, or infinite love at work, they must be uniform and changeless. When God does a thing he does it the right way. Under precisely the same circumstances, he must do it again in precisely the same way, or do it in some better way, which is absurd. It is out of this conception of things that springs our thought of the uniformity of nature, and that makes that uniformity necessary. It would do an unspeakably larger

amount of mischief and evil, if there were a doubt as to the absolute uniformity of natural law, than is wrought at the present time by men's misconception of these forces through ignorance of them, or through putting themselves, as it were, under the wheels of the moving forces of nature and being crushed by them. However great the amount of evil and suffering that is wrought to-day, it would be infinitely more if we could not count on the uniformity of natural forces.

Occupying this stand-point of human thought, let us look about us, and see what conceptions of this infinite power are forced upon us by the intelligent study of things. We are encompassed on every hand by a power that to us is infinite. The old psalm-writer caught a marvellously beautiful and powerful glimpse of that idea when he asked whether it was possible for him to hide from God, saying that the night and the day were alike to him; that, if he ascended into heaven, he would not escape him, for he is there; if he descended into the abyss, he would not escape him, for he was there also. If he took the wings of the morning and flew to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there he would find this same power. It was on his right hand and on his left, behind him, before him, and around him. It is this power of which Paul said, "In him we live and move and have our being." There is, then, all around us this infinite power. I do not ask you to think of it as God yet. I ask you to take no step faster than that which I indicate as I advance from point to point. We are surrounded by this infinite power; and, on any theory, we are the offspring of that power. It has produced us. It is our father and mother. Out of it we have come, such as we are and whatever we are.

One step farther. It is often said that the first and most fundamental idea in religion is the sense of dependence. If that be so, then here is eternal basis for that; for we are

dependent on this mighty power every moment of our lives. From the first breath we draw until the last, we are, as it were, in the arms of this power; and all the good of life, all its joy, all its peace, all its hope, all that we are and all that we have, is the product of this power.

One step more. In this power is the law of our life. Whatever good we have attained has been by as much as we have understood and have obeyed this power, no matter whether we have done it ignorantly, have stumbled into it, or have done it as the result of deliberate and careful study. All the good, all the joy, all that makes life worth living, has come from so much of knowledge and obedience to this infinite power as we have been able to gain. This power is mystery. We shall never comprehend it, I hope. At the same time, this mystery is the sun. We cannot look at the sun without being blinded; but it is the sun that gives us all the light we have. We cannot penetrate this infinite mystery now; and we never shall penetrate it, unless the finite, by being piled up, can reach to the height of the infinite. And yet this eternal mystery is the light of all our seeing. It makes no difference where we turn, where we begin our inquiry, we find ourselves in a moment face to face with this baffling, alluring, inscrutable mystery.

Suppose we examine a grass-blade. We talk about its color, its beauty. We ask where they came from, what makes this mystery of its life and growth; and some one tells me about the seed that was sown in the soil, and, if he be specially learned, he will tell us about the qualities of the soil and moisture, about the sunlight and its chemical power, and how by the working of all these there comes the product in this grass-blade. But I go a little deeper. I not only want to know where the grass-blade came from, but I go back of the seed; and I ask why this result rather

than some other, what are these forces of nature that produce this special result, and why have they produced it? And a few questions bring me to the brink of all we know; and there I am on the outermost verge of human investigation, face to face with the infinite mystery and the infinite life.

Or suppose, leaving the simple fact of the growth of this blade of grass, I turn to a flower, and ask where the beauty and the fragrance of the flower come from. Some one gives me an elaborate chemical explanation that does teach me much as to the process; but I press the question deeper and deeper, further and further, and again I come to the verge of all we know, and face the inscrutable mystery,— not only of life now, but of fragrance and beauty as well.

Leaving these little things, I turn my glass to the heavens, and study a constellation or a solar system, a sun surrounded by its group of planets, they followed by their attendant moons. And I ask how this comes to be, and to be what it is. And the astronomer learnedly discourses on the processes by which these have been developed. But I am led back to the same line of thought, and I ask as to its origin; and I am again brought face to face with the infinite mystery. And so, if I start with a truth, the love of truth in the human mind, the human conscience, the sense of justice, and raise the question as to how that has originated, the moral philosopher will discourse to me about human experience, and show how people have come to think of each other as other selves; and so the idea of justice has been born. But what set these people in the particular relations out of which this sense of justice has sprung? Again, no matter which way I turn, or what I question, or where I begin my investigations, it is the same. Let me take this web of the universe, so marvellously and intricately

woven, and pick up one tiny thread anywhere, and let me follow it through and down and back, and trace its origin, try to find out how it has been twined and twisted as it is; and I am led to the infinite mystery, the power, the wisdom, that demands to be thought of as the explanation, but which itself is forever inexplicable.

Now take this another way. I wish you to get the impression of what I distinctly mean,— that I am not playing with the imagination, that I am not taking one single step of assumption, that I am not forgetting for one instant the rigor of the scientific method of procedure. Take a few axioms which are the very basis of all that the world knows or claims to know. You are familiar with them: "A stream does not rise higher than its source," "Nothing comes from nothing," "Nothing is evolved which was not first involved," "Every effect must have an adequate cause." Let us lay these down as a platform on which to stand for a little while. These are the very foundation and basis of all the world's knowledge, of all modern science.

Now, let us look at a few things that, as a matter of fact, exist, that have come from somewhere, and that demand a cause that is equal to them. Note, in the first place, this marvellous fact of self-consciousness, that has come from somewhere. It demands a cause adequate. There must be, then, in this infinite power that closes us round, not necessarily a counterpart, an exact copy of my personal self-consciousness,— do not think that I am absurd enough to suppose that God is in my image, or that I can limit him by the limits of my own personality,— but in this infinite power and life there must be something adequate, equal to self-consciousness, something that is as much as that. Scientists and philosophers tell us that thought is developed by brain, and that we cannot conceive of there being any thought

where there is no brain; and, if there is any such thing as infinite thought, there must be an infinite brain, which they declare to be absurd. But here is thought; and, in this infinite life out of which we with our thought have really come, there must be that which at least is adequate to thought, which is equal to it, which is as much as thought. There is in us love, tenderness, pity. Is there no love, tenderness, pity, in anything that we may call, even by a figure of speech, the infinite heart? Love, tenderness, pity, are facts. They are products of the infinite life: they are births from that father and mother source of all things. Then it follows that there must be at least something adequate, equal to, as much as love, tenderness, pity. There is justice in the world, a sense of justice ever growing, deepening, broadening, lifting. There must then be, by parity of reasoning, in this infinite source something equal to, adequate to, the production of justice.

Not only this. All these things which make up the glory of humanity have been growing, age after age, throughout the whole period of human history. The power which produces these things is a power like that which we saw in the grass-blade, in the corn,— a power that lifts and pushes and reaches forward age after age. If I go into a cornfield and see a stalk of corn half-grown, if I have watched it day after day in its process of development, have seen each twenty-four hours that it had come to something more than it was the day before, the conviction grows on me, until it becomes irresistible, that the power that produced it, and made it come up to its present point, is not exhausted; that it has only partially manifested itself; that it is adequate to the completion of that which it has begun,— and how much more? No one knows. This power, then, out of which we have come, has produced us and made us what we are; and it is ade-

quate not only to that which has been and is, but to carrying us on to perfection. God, then, this infinite power, is as much as, and equal to, an ideally perfect manhood. So much seems to me simply scientific, common-sense demonstration.

I must point out to you here a fallacy, which weakens this argument, even to its destruction, in the eyes of many. I listened within a year to a brilliant speaker, a man who is looked up to with reverence by a great many as a careful and profound thinker, and all the way through he based his argument on what seems to me this shallow fallacy of which I am about to speak. He said that, if we are to worship any one, then we must worship man; that men are the only ones that have ever developed anything that we call goodness. If we are to have any God, that he must at least be good; for we cannot worship power. We can only worship the moral ideal. Therefore, he said, we can find an object to worship only within the range of human life. As we look at nature, he said, we find no traces of feeling, no traces of goodness. Nature is hard, pitiless, cruel, unfeeling. Nature would as soon crush a little child as to help one in distress: nature is utterly indifferent to both. Therefore, he said, the power which is manifested in nature, God, must be no better than his manifestation,— therefore not an object of worship. This is a childish, pitiable fallacy, from beginning to end. Is nature only the ocean that drowns people, or the volcano that overthrows a town, or the earthquake that destroys human property and life? Is it only the marsh that develops disease? Is nature only the lightning that smites? Is nature only the sun that warms? Where do *we* come in? What are we to do with humanity? This seems to me to be playing Hamlet with Hamlet left out with a vengeance. Man is not only a part of nature: he is its culmination, its flower, its crown. And, as we say of a man he must be

judged by his best, so let us say of nature. Judged by its best, the best that nature has yet produced, is a man. Man is not something that we can leave out. Man is not only a part of nature, but the most important part of it; and we must take him into account if we are to talk about nature and about power as it manifests itself in and through nature. Let us remember, then, when we are looking after God, not to go down into the very beginnings, the ooze, the mud and primal slime, and think that there is all there is of it. Let us climb up into the intellectual heights of a Shakspere, the spiritual heights of a Moses, an Isaiah, a Jesus; climb up into the tenderness, into the love, the pity, the justice, the help, the sacrifice, the grandest qualities of human character and life, and say, This is what nature comes to in its highest development. When nature writes its final sentence, it is a perfect, ideal, loving, tender, helpful man. That is what nature means. If you are looking after God in and through nature, follow it to its ultimate, not stick at the beginning.

As we, then, study the world, including man, as we study the universe from its lowest to its highest, it seems to me that we can climb through nature up to nature's God. What do we mean by God? What is it we are after? We have found out that man is essentially, necessarily, a religious being; and God we think of as the source and the ultimate aim and object of the religious life. If we find, then, that this infinite, mysterious power is fitted, is adequate to, equal to, all these things in us which we name religious, is fitted to match them and inspire them, to lift them to the ideal, then have we not found an adequate source, aim, object, for the religious life? We have found out that religion implies the thought of this infinite power not ourselves, a thought of certain relations existing between ourselves and this power; and we know that better relations may and ought to exist,

and the object of religion is to establish this better relation day by day and year after year. We found, near the close of our sermon last Sunday, that the highest manifestation of religious life in men must consist of three things,— true thought, noble feeling, and right action. A man who thinks truly, feels nobly, and acts rightly is the ideal man; and religion can do nothing for him except help him to be all these. If, then, there is in this power to which we are related something that matches this thought of ours, something that matches this feeling of ours, something that matches this power of action, something that provokes thought, that inspires and improves all thoughts and lifts them to their highest, what more do we want of a God than that? This power is the only truth, of which all our little truth is only a fragment. There is the ideal. This power manifesting itself through nature and man,— this is the infinite emotion, love, pity, tenderness, justice, help, of which I have spoken. This power is the ideal of all right action.

As we stand, then, facing this inexplicable mystery, power, and law of our life, we find infinite truth; we find infinite tenderness, love, emotion of every noble kind; we find the ideal for all right action. Here is something to be reverenced, to be worshipped, something to be loved, something to be trusted, something to take as our standard of action, something to be our helper in becoming ever higher and nobler than we have been in the past. We shall never know this power completely, because it is infinite and we are finite. If we could know it, it would be the end of all perfection. Such a thing as infinite advance would be absurd. Men may be trained to believe in certain ideals and names. They may think they believe no longer in God, but it will only mean that they believe no longer in this man's God or that man's God. They must believe in this infinite power and

love. No man can name it, no thought can comprehend it; and yet I am scientifically warranted, as I think, in saying, as my last confession on this subject,— a saying in which I hope you will all reverentially, tenderly, devoutly join,— *I believe in God.*

REVELATION.

In the second sermon of this series, dealing with the question, "What Light have we to guide us?" I touched briefly upon some views held concerning the Bible. Those who are familiar with the line of my preaching for several years past will know that I have touched upon some one phase or another of this subject more than once, and, superficially listening, might suppose that I had forgotten myself, and this morning was about to walk unconsciously over the same old field. But the purpose I have in view is quite distinct from any that I have treated in the past, and the scope of what I say will be somewhat broader than any previous treatment.

This question of revelation,— as to whether we have one, as to whether it is definite and clear enough to meet our practical needs,—all this is constantly recurring and coming up over and over again; and, until people have some clear and definite thoughts on these subjects,— clearer than they already possess, judging by personal conversation and letters that are constantly coming to me,— the theme will need reiterated treatment. I am convinced, at any rate, that false views concerning divine revelation — mistaken, narrow, bigoted conceptions as to what it means — stand in the way not only of political, social, and scientific progress, but in the way of religious progress, more than any other one thing.

You are perfectly well aware how, for the last thousand

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years, almost every step of advance that the race has taken, whether in science, in philosophy, in medicine, in sociology, in politics, in any department of life, has been met and opposed by a text; and this text has been supposed to settle the matter for good and all. The people, therefore, who have held this conception of the divine revelation have stood in the attitude of opposition to any new light that might come from Him who is the source and centre of all illumination; and, their minds being filled with these false, partial, narrow ideas, there has been no place for the entry of anything broader or finer or higher. Then this conception of the infallibility of a book, of its being the one only complete revelation from God to man, cultivates the spirit of antagonism to one's fellows; cultivates a spirit of pride, as though we who have this were the favorites to whom God had spoken. It cultivates a spirit of bitterness and opposition to those who would accept any larger, deeper, higher, grander theory of the Word of God. I was conversing with a friend in one of our larger cities only a few days ago; and he told me that, for having been instrumental in having a lecture given in that city, in which some of these larger, grander ideas were set forth, he had found that many an old friend, who had been cordial and kindly to him for years, was ready now to turn upon him the cold shoulder — for no other reason but this.

Then this acceptance of the Bible as the one infallible Word of God, besides cultivating this spirit of exclusiveness, making those who hold it feel that they are favorites of God, and that all others are outside of the circle of that favor, tends to create a spirit of hypocrisy, of double dealing, of covering up of real opinions which may be held on the part of those who are ready in private to accept other light from some other source. This view is held by all the old

churches. The churches are planted upon this as their foundation. These views are wrought into the very fibre of society, so that social relations are more or less built upon them. Men and women attend this church or that for social reasons, for business reasons, for the sake of the station they may have, for the sake of entering into certain relations with their fellow-men. But there are thousands, as is well known to-day, who are convinced that there is a wider, larger, finer truth abroad, who studiously conceal their convictions or only whisper them to a friend or neighbor under their breath.

I received a letter within a day or two from a gentleman at the South, whom I never met; and he tells me, what we all know in so many directions, that he is ostracized for his opinions, and that he knows gentlemen who share the same, who tell him that they cannot afford to confess them. The same gentleman, to whom I first referred, in a neighboring city, told me frankly that, if his business was such that he were dependent upon the patronage of the public, he could not afford his convictions.

These views, then, of the exclusiveness of the revelation of God as contained within a certain book, do work practical evil. They do stand in the way of the progress of mankind. They do cultivate feelings of bitterness. They do tend to develop hypocrisy and the covering up of one's real opinions. They do stand in the way of the higher development of men; and they do lead practically to the breaking down of the moral fibre of the mind. There are thousands of persons who have been taught, as most of us have, that the one great reason for conduct was the supposed infallible law contained in a supposed infallible book; that there was no moral law, no basis for religious life, outside this book.

What is the effect of this? Why, people who appreciate the value of religion and morality will fight against any

larger light for the sake of this, even in the face of the half-conviction as to the unsoundness of their position; for they say, If it be indeed true that the Bible is the basis of these grand elements of human life, then we must hold it at all hazards, in spite of all things that can be brought against it. And I have had it said to me, over and over again, "If you will bring to me a better book, against which fewer objections can be urged, we will take it,"—as though it must be some book and one unquestionably without error.

Again, there is that feeling growing out of this on the part of liberals. I see it, I recognize it, I deplore it every week of my life. Having been taught that the Bible was the infallible revelation of God, and having become convinced that it was not, what is the natural course for the liberal man to take? I hear it said, every little while, that the Bible is not any better than any other book. People say, "We do not read it: we do not teach our children to read it." They seem to feel that, if it is not an infallible book, then it is of no value whatever. Strange, curious logic! Parallel to this, on the other hand, are those who say that we must accept the whole of the Bible or nothing. What would you think of the miner who should decline to work a vein of gold because the entire mountain in which it was found was not solid ore? You would smile at a folly like this in any other direction. But there are thousands of liberals in Europe and America who are not ashamed to be grossly ignorant of the one book which has played a larger part in the history of the world than any other. No matter what may be the ultimate position we shall take regarding it, we cannot understand our political history, our social condition, without reference to the Bible. Our literature is interwoven with it from first to last. We cannot go to Europe and visit the picture galleries intelligently, without

a knowledge of the Bible; and then, whatever theories you choose to hold concerning it, it is the grandest of all religious literature that the world has ever seen. All that is true in it, all that is grand, all that is inspiring, all that is helpful, all that is food for our moral and spiritual nature,— all these remain, whatever theory you may hold as to its origin or the position which it ought to take as beside the other great books of the world.

So much, then, by way of preface and of reason for treating once more this great subject of divine revelation. I propose to go over the ground as briefly and clearly as I can, and tell you whether I think there is a divine revelation, and, if so, where it is to be found and what is its nature.

The old theologians almost always began, after assuming their own belief in God for the purpose, by saying that this God, our Father, caring for his children, would naturally make a revelation of his purpose and his will toward them. He would tell them what sort of a being he is. He would let them know something about themselves and of what they ought to do. He would throw some light upon their earthly pathway. Then, after announcing this as probably true, these same old theologians proceed to take the Bible as being the one book that we can rationally regard as containing such a revelation as this, and argue that, in this, we possess that which we supposed God would be likely to give to his children; and, of course, in the process of proving that this is a divine revelation, they will naturally minimize the errors and difficulties, and end by telling us that here we have a complete, final, perfect revelation of God to man.

Let us look at the Bible for a few minutes. I cannot go into detail for lack of time; neither is it needful, after the many things that can be found on this subject in other

sermons, books, and treatises by the score. Let us review the reasons why we cannot accept this as being the infallible and complete revelation of God.

Suppose we take the Bible in our hands, and look at it. What have we? Sixty-six small treatises bound in one volume. We have here history, law, prophecy, proverbs, poetry, biography, epistles, and all varieties of literature, bound up in one volume.

When were these books written? They were written at different times, covering a period, speaking roughly, of a thousand years. Who wrote them? We do not know, except in a few cases. When were they written? Definitely and precisely, we do not know, perhaps, in the case of a single one of them. Where were they written? In the main, we do not know. We know in what country most of them were written, not in what town or by what hand. Concerning these matters, we are ignorant. It seems a little strange that we should know so little about so wonderful a book.

Do these sixty-six books agree with each other? Do they all tell the same story? Are they at one in their accounts of events and in their enunciation of principles? No. They contradict each other in the most glaring way, and are simply irreconcilable, as every one knows who has no object in making the contrary appear.

What is, then, the nature of the authority which this book possesses? What do we go to it for? You are aware that the world used to go to the Bible for everything. Let us note a few of the things that we do not even claim that we go to it for to-day; and mark this one thing: even those who assert its infallibility still have ceased to use it as practically an authority concerning almost all of these things.

No one thinks of going to the Bible to-day for his science, for his conceptions of the universe, for his knowledge as to how and when the worlds came into being. No one thinks of going to it for astronomy. No one thinks of accepting its story in regard to the relation to the earth of the other heavenly bodies. Again, no one thinks of taking the Bible as ultimate authority in history. It tells, indeed, its story of the origin of nations; but it is not the story which the intelligent world to-day believes. It tells its story in regard to the origin of languages; but the account that it gives the world recognizes as only the childish tradition of the childhood world. No one thinks of taking the Bible as authority in political economy. Even the principles of political economy which Jesus himself enunciated there is not a single political economist in the Church to-day, or out of it, who would advocate as generally practical. No one thinks of going to the Bible as ultimate authority in medicine, in regard to the nature, origin, and cure of disease. The New Testament gives specific, definite, apparently authoritative directions as to what shall be done in case of the illness of Christians. There is not a Christian on earth to-day who thinks of carrying out these directions or making them practical. Then in regard to the ethics of the Bible,—are they regarded still as final, finished, complete? The ethical teaching of the early part of the Bible is regarded as belonging to and naturally springing out of a barbaric age, part of it long ago outgrown. Even the ethical teachings of Jesus are not all accepted by the civilized world to-day. They are quietly laid by. No one says in open terms that they are rejected; but, practically, they are not regarded as authority. They are not included in treatises on ethics. No one tries to live them out; and, if we did try, some of us believe that the progress of society would be

hindered rather than helped. So in regard to all these great questions. The Bible is no longer regarded, even by Christians, as practically infallible. The churches to-day feel the influence of the spirit of the modern world, recognize the general precepts and laws of society, and are governed by them. But, while they in their pulpits and in their churches confess the infallibility of the Bible as complete in every part, they quietly ignore so much of it as does not square with the spirit and progress of the modern world. One or two other results must be noted. If we should accept the Bible as infallible, as the one revelation of God to man, we should have to apologize all the time for God. We should have to apologize for apparent errors, for mistakes in science, in history, in political economy, in medicine. We should have to apologize for his character as being partial and imperfect. If that be the only revelation of God to man, then it follows that either he does not wish to reveal himself to the most of his children or that he has tried, and has not succeeded. This book began to be written in fragments, probably three thousand years ago. How much, how large a part, of the world to-day is familiar with it? Does God want the world to be familiar with it? If he does, is he not able to execute his will? If he does not, then does he love all of his children or love only a few? This book, according to the popular interpretation of it, teaches that only those who know about it and accept it and live it are going to be saved. Does God wish that they should be saved, or does he wish that they should be lost? If he does wish that they shall be saved, are there not resources in omnipotent power by means of which he could spread this book over all the world, and make its light so clear that all men would be compelled to see?

These, then, are some of the things in the way of accept-

ing the Bible as the sole revelation of God; but, mark you, this does not at all mean that it may not contain fragments, magnificent fragments, of what is real divine revelation. For all the truth in it, all the humanity in it, all the tenderness, all the aspiration, all the beauty, all the fine ethical principles, all the religious inspiration, all these things that are still vital, thrilling, throbbing with life, that are capable of helping and lifting men,—these are from the one source, and in my view are a part of divine revelation.

Leaving that, let us come to the wider theme. I told you the process by which the old theologians have been accustomed to argue. Believing in God, they believed that it would be natural for him to reveal himself to men. I believe in God with my whole soul. I believe quite as much as the old theologians did that it is natural for us to expect God to reveal himself to his children. I believe just as much as they did that he has revealed himself to his children. Let us now turn for a little, and see if we can find where this revelation is, and what are some of the principal truths that have been revealed.

We talk about God as unseen and unknown and unknowable. Perhaps, in one sense, this is true. We shall never know him completely, because the finite cannot grasp the infinite; and yet all we do know is just so much knowledge of God. A parallel thing or almost parallel, quite near enough for our purpose, is true in regard to man. There is not a single man on earth who is completely known by other men. Essential man is as invisible as God, as unknowable as God, as unfathomable as God. What do you know about your dearest friend? You know the general contour of the body; you know the height, shape, color of hair, expression of face; you know his general attitude, his methods or movements, the dress he wears, the tone of his

voice, the kind of words to which he gives utterance. You know the principles which underlie his character; you know all that which is manifested externally, as a part of the outcome of that which is never completely expressed. That is all you know about any man; and you know as much about God; for all that is is God's word, his utterance, the outshining, the manifestation of the divine.

Let us look then, for a moment, at this magnificent universe outside of humanity. Here is one volume of that great book which constitutes the ever-growing revelation of God. What do we discover in the way of revelation, as we look at nature outside of man? We find, first, the revelation of the fact of eternal life, of eternal spirit and power. The leaves come out in the spring, and the leaves fall in the autumn. Constellations, like leaves, blossom, or unfold in the sky, grow old and fall. All things that are visible change and pass away; but, in the midst of all these changes, there is eternal demonstration of the one life, one power, of which these are local and temporary manifestations, but which itself is eternal and unchanging. Modern science tells us that there is no one fact demonstrated with such unquestioned certainty as the fact of the existence of this one eternal, unchanging life and power.

Now, let us see if we can get at some of the qualities of this life and power. It manifests itself first as being what we have just called it,— power, almighty power from our stand-point, unmeasured and to us unmeasurable, which is as near omnipotence as we can, or need, to go. Next, it manifests itself as eternal law and order, matching the keenest and finest thought and insight of man. Everywhere, we see perfect, perfect, perfect order; and, if there is anywhere apparent confusion, anything that we cannot understand and reason through, we know it is the fault of our limitations, and

not a lack of law or order or intelligence. Then there is the manifestation of progress, development, growth, of tendency toward an end. I say it without any fear of being successfully disputed by the scientists: there is the manifestation of what we must regard as purpose, plan. If there is anything certain from the beginning of this world until now, it is the uplifting and onreaching of the power at work toward certain definite ends. But we have no other name for a process like this, except plan or purpose. So much, then, we can read of the revelation of God in the universe outside of man.

When we come, as we must, to include humanity in this grand word, this outshining, this manifestation, this revelation of God, then how dear that word begins to grow to us; for here we find righteousness, goodness, love, pity, readiness to suffer for others and to help. All these grand moral qualities, these spiritual aspirations, these glimpses of the ideal, all that is finest and sweetest in human nature and human life, are a part of the word of God. These are God speaking.

Take an illustration of what I mean. Visit a battle-field, and, amid all the horrors of carnage, see some act of heroic devotion to principle or heroic sacrifice for the sake of a friend. See a man standing and holding his flag when he knows it means death, and when he might be safe and happy in flight and disgrace. Could he? His body might be safe, animal happiness might be secured; but that which he feels and knows to be manliness would not be safe nor happy. Safer and happier in the face of death itself, he feels, is that which he regards as his manhood. And so he stands and dies. There is a word of God uttered through the life of this man. It is an illustration of that which is eternal, which is in the infinite and eternal life. Else, whence came it?

How did it manifest itself amid the smoke and confusion of the battle-field?

Visit some sick-chamber. A child is ill with some infectious disease; but the mother does not desert the child, even though she knows that every breath she draws she is taking the risk of breathing in the fatal germ which may end her own life. Day and night, in sleeplessness and weariness, she watches. What does this mean? It means one great illustration of what is possible in the way of finding the high, beautiful, in human character and human life. It means one little glint, a broken ray, shining out from that infinite source in which all these things find their beginning and their completion. Stand beside the martyr at the stake, and read another word of God. Stand with the business man, in his integrity losing all and seeing his fortune shattered and falling to pieces around him rather than be dishonest, and read another word of God. Wherever you find anything high or fine or true in human nature and human life, there you are reading a word, a sentence, a chapter, of the revelation of the divine.

All these things, then, that are true and fine and sweet in human nature, as well as that which is magnificent and grand and awful in the universe about men, are sentences of this word of God that has never been bound, because it is not yet complete.

Where, then, is this word of God? Where, then, is divine revelation? Where is it not? Every sermon that is preached, every hymn that is sung, every prayer that is offered, every aspiration of the human heart, everything that is true, everything that is beautiful, everything that is good, is a part of it. And the evil,— I do not forget this objection,— the evil, the pain, the sin, the suffering, the heart-ache, the crime,— are these also manifestations of God? Nay, these are not nor-

mal. These are not real, in the sense that the positive and the good are real. These are not in the nature of things. They are only the results of the violation of the nature of things. They are the result of the broken lights, the cross-purposes, the ignorance, the passions, of humanity. When we have grown to read the word of God in its clearness and fulness, to see it as it is in its perfection, then these things, like shadows, will have flown away. The evil will not remain; for it is no part of the permanent universe of God: it is something being perpetually corrected and outgrown.

Is this revelation to be a substitute for the Bible? It is curious how people reason. I remember some years ago, when I was delivering my course of sermons on "The Morals of Evolution," I received a letter from my old minister, the one whom I used to hear preach when I was a boy; and he said: "I am watching with a good deal of curiosity to see what you will give us as a substitute for Christianity. When you have left out all the teaching of Christ, I am interested to see what you are going to put in the place of it." I smiled when I read that letter, and then wrote him that I had no idea of leaving out the teaching of Christ or the ethics of Christianity. I would not offer a substitute for those, as if one must say, Take this or this. It is, Take them both, take them all. It is not a choice with us between the complete, perfect, world-wide revelation of God and the Bible. This complete, age-long, perfect, world-wide revelation of God includes the Bible, all that is in it of fine or sweet or helpful. It only sets us free to discard and lay one side whatever in the Bible is not helpful and healthful to our moral and spiritual growth. This revelation of God, then, includes all truth in all ages, in all nations, in all religions, in all literatures, in all science, in all art, in all Bibles, in all hymns, in all churches, in all prayers. All things are

ours; and all that is truth and inspiration is a part of the liberal's grand heritage.

I have brought out in these sermons, once or twice, a point of so much importance that I propose to keep it before you as a key-note. I have said that the essential things in religion are right thinking, right feeling, right action. The principal things concerning which we need revelation, then, are concerning right thought, right feeling, right action. We need to find truth, so that our thoughts about things shall be correct. We need to be moved by right impulses, because, ultimately, all action springs out of feeling. Action does not spring out of thought. A man may think and think and think forever; but, unless he also feels, he would never speak or act. Feeling, impulse, emotion, lead to deeds. So noble feeling is something concerning which we need guidance, and out of this will necessarily spring right action.

Have we, then, an infallible revelation? We have one that is infallible enough for all our needs. Indeed, it is the only infallible revelation. Truth, in so far as it is made clear to us, and is confirmed by study, verified by experiment, over and over again, becomes a part of the changeless and unchangeable word of God. This revelation of ours needs no apology on our part. We do not have to explain human errors, human blunders. We do not have to apologize for barbaric morality, for crude, childish ways of looking at things. These are perfectly natural in their age, and are, one by one, outgrown and left behind. This revelation, again, is not a partial one, given to one little people. It is world-wide in its sweep, given to all men as fast and as far as they are capable of receiving and comprehending it. This revelation is a growing one, perfect enough for our purpose to-day, but constantly unfolding as the brain develops, as the social, political life enlarges,— adapting itself ever to the growing needs of humanity.

I believe, then, not only in God, but that he has spoken to men, telling them what they ought to know. I believe that he is speaking to us to-day, and that we need to listen with consecrated ears and reverent hearts. I believe that there are words still unspoken that we shall hear to-morrow morning,— new watch-words, grander utterances, that will be music and inspiration in the hearts of the peoples of the coming time. And so the loving God speaks to and leads on his living, loving children age after age forever.

IS THIS A GOOD WORLD?

THIS is, logically, the next great question in the series of sermons on My Creed. One may find his way out of the old theory of the universe and into the new one; he may settle it in his own mind as to what light there is to guide him in his new world; he may hold the belief that religion is something permanent in its relations to human life; he may believe in God, or a Supreme Power that controls all things; he may accept some theory of revelation,— the unfolding of the life, the thought, the purpose of this Power,— and still the old question may remain, whether, on the whole and in the long run, the world is good, whether life is worth while, whether all the troubles and burdens and sorrows do not more than overbalance the satisfactions.

If we go far enough back in the history of human thought, we come to a time when this was hardly a practical question. People believed in "gods many and lords many," some of them good and some of them bad, and some of them good and bad together; and they indiscriminately worshipped these powers, attempting to express their gratitude for favors or to propitiate their wrath. It never occurred to them in those early days to raise this great moral question, whether these supreme powers did right or were under any obligation to do right. When people were members of a tribe ruled by a despotic chief, who did whatever he pleased without any question on the part of his subjects, and against

whom on any such ground as this it never occurred to any one to rebel, it is not strange that they should raise no very nice questions as to the righteous authority of their gods. Submitting to a human despot, it did not occur to them to rebel against a divine one. But, in the progress of human thought and the development of human life, there came a time when the old Hebrew prophet raised the question, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Do you see the significance of that question? Once admit the right of asking it, and the thought that "might makes right" is forever antiquated. For, if might makes right, if God has the right to do simply as he pleases, then there is no significance, no relevance, in asking the question whether he shall do right; for whatever he chooses, on that theory, is right. When men, then, have come to the point of asking whether the Judge of all the earth is under obligation to the moral law, then there is an acceptance of the idea of the moral law which inheres in the very nature of things, and which even God himself is not at liberty to disregard. Just as soon, then, as this came to be a practical question in human thought, then the world was face to face with this age-long problem as to how the suffering and pain and evil of the world could be reconciled with this idea that the Judge of all the earth was under obligation to do right. This is the old problem concerning which the author of the Book of Job was so troubled. The whole book is devoted to an attempt at settling the difficulty; and yet it is not settled in a way that is satisfactory to any tender and enlightened modern conscience.

It was this problem that the seers and teachers of the far East pondered over as they fled from the ways of men and made their abodes in the wilderness. Buddha, seeing so much human suffering, cannot bear to live as a prince

lifted above his fellows and free from the common lot. So he renounces his throne, and gives his life to the attempt to find out how he can alleviate the condition of his fellows, how he can solve these great problems. He does not do it from any trust in the gods. He even suggests, with a bitter sort of irony, that, since the gods seem so incapable of helping humanity in their need, perhaps they themselves may be in need of help.

This is the problem which touched the hearts and troubled the thought of the old Greek tragedians, the one we find Æschylus raising in his great drama of *Prometheus Bound.* Prometheus, a human hero and helper, chained by almighty Power to a rock in the Caucasus, suffers for ages because he had helped men. And the old poet tries to find a solution of this apparent utter contradiction between the almighty Power and the almighty Goodness.

This is the problem that Plato attacked,— the problem of philosophy, indeed, in all ages. This is the theme of the great poem of Dante. And Milton, when he sits down to write his epic, declares that his purpose is

"To justify the ways of God to men."

He does not succeed; for no man reads *Paradise Lost* to-day on account of any interest he may have in Milton's attempted solution of this question. This is the great problem that the tender-hearted, earnest thinkers of all the world have attempted. And thousands, as they have looked over the scene of a suffering, toiling, struggling humanity, have lost faith in God, and said, It cannot be that there is any almighty love in heaven, and these things here on earth!

It is said that the young Goethe was so shocked by the sight of human suffering by some great natural calamity that in his youth, for a time, he became an utter sceptic as

to any supreme wisdom or power or love. John Stuart Mill, one of the profoundest, clearest-headed thinkers and one of the tenderest-hearted writers of the modern world, has planted himself distinctly and definitely on this ground. He says this scene of suffering compels us to believe one of two things,— either God is not almighty or is not all-good. He says we can save his goodness at the expense of his power, or we can save his power at the expense of his goodness; but he thinks we cannot believe in both.

Robert Ingersoll makes this one of the main items in his perpetual charge against the justice and goodness of things. He ridicules the idea that a good God would build a world for his children, and plant it with disease, fill the jungle with serpents and wild beasts, make the sea treacherous, hide earthquakes under the surface of the ground, and rock down buildings after they had been constructed, and make everything at such cross-purposes that it would be practically impossible for men to live out a happy, successful life. There seems to him to be in this a flat contradiction.

The most brilliant statement of this scepticism that I have heard in many a day was that which was given to us by Mr. Moncure D. Conway at a meeting of the Free Religious Association. He pictured nature as a monster, a fiend, cruel, heartless; eyes made of the flame of volcanoes; breath of miasma, poison, pestilence; an incarnation of power without any heart and without in itself any evidence of goodness or love.

Let us now glance for one moment at the items in this great indictment against the goodness of the supreme Power. First, as I have already intimated, men perpetually recount the great disasters that attend the on-going of the mechanism of nature about us. They picture the earthquake shaking down cities, while the appalled inhabitants flee from their

homes only to be crushed and mangled by the falling ruins. They picture a ship at sea, the plaything of the storm, at last overwhelmed by the waves, while the helpless, hopeless passengers sink shrieking into the waves that have no heart, crying to the winds that never hear. They picture to us famine, and the thin white lips and wasted faces, the hungering eyes of those that cry to the pitiless heaven for bread. Then they turn to disease, and point us to the mother watching over the crib of the child wasting away, while she has no power to stay the hand that is leading the little one down into the shadow. They point to the pain, the suffering, that so many of us have to endure, that perhaps all of us have to endure more or less on our brief journey between the cradle and the grave. Then they turn from these, and, as the next count of their indictment, tell us of the moral evils of the world,— of oppression, of cruelties, of the slave-driver with his whip lashing the worn and weary worker, and compelling him to fulfil his task. They tell us of tyrants, like Nero, sporting with the pain and suffering of men. They point out the thousand crimes that darken the annals of human life. They tell us of the evil that all of us are conscious of in our own hearts,— the conflict between our sense of right, between our conscience and the failures of our accomplishment.

Then, as another count still in this long indictment, they point out the illusions of life,— how life seems to thwart us, how we seem to strive after something that is never attained, how our hopes are blighted, our ideals elude us. They draw a picture of men and women seeking after high things, striving to accomplish noble results, who are thwarted by a life ever at cross-purposes, until at last they stand on the verge of life's horizon, ready to pass behind the curtain, feeling that they have accomplished almost nothing of that which they have attempted,— life a promise never fulfilled. Then,

as crowning all this evil, as something to be mentioned by itself, although it is the natural result of all this, yet a something to be mentioned by itself because it stands alone in its universal terror, they bring up the great fact of death. Men ask, Is it possible, in the face of facts like these, to believe that a God of love and power rules the world? Is it reasonable to believe that there is any plan or purpose in all this maze of apparent contradiction?

Yet a striking thing that I wish you to note especially, over against all this doubt, all this questioning, all this appalling contradiction, is the fact that, in all ages of the world, in almost all human hearts, in spite of this doubt, in spite of the questioning and the scepticism, there has been an inexpugnable faith, a trust in the essential righteousness, justice, and love of the world. Almost all men in all ages, right in the face of sin and sorrow and suffering and death, have still believed that love and justice did really rule this old world. They have demanded that they should rule it,— an imperious demand that would not be gainsaid,— and they have declared that, if they could not see the issue of righteousness and truth, why, then, there must be some other scene, issue, outcome, that should balance these,— a result that should justify this process. This faith the writer of the Book of Job expressed when he said, while they were taunting him with his trust, while they were trying to make him give up his faith, while he was sitting in sackcloth and ashes with all his hopes in ruins about him, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." There is, I say, then, this grand fact or this stupendous folly of the human heart,— which? — that is to be set over against this sin and suffering and evil and sorrow. But remember that this trust, this belief in an overruling justice and goodness, is a fact as real as is an earthquake, a famine, a fever, a war, or death. It is a fact of

human life, a manifestation of some reality in the nature of things that wells up in the human heart as this inextinguishable trust. This fact, quite as much as the other, must be accounted for and explained by one who proposes to solve the problem.

Now, then, we are ready to turn and face this question, and see if we can find any possible solution. I propose to look at it for a little while from the side of our conception of God as related to the world, and then from the standpoint of human nature and human life, and see if I can find any possible answer to the question.

In the first place, let me say with all frankness that I believe we must be able to come to the conclusion that there is no causeless, no useless, no aimless sorrow in the world, in order that we may vindicate the divine character from the charges which our hearts bring against him. Tennyson expresses the faith of the human heart in those famous lines:—

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete.
>
> "That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain."

If it can be proved beyond question that even a worm, a moth, is the sport of an arbitrary power that cares not for suffering or sorrow, but merely plays with it for no end, then I, for one, would surrender my faith in God. I say then, frankly, at the outset, that any trust in God that is worthy of the name must come to the conclusion that there is no intentional, no needless, no useless suffering in all the world.

If God is not all love only, but all wisdom as well, then that very love of his may lead him to make us suffer. If God be really perfect, he could not be like a sentimental, childish father or mother, who is willing to give its child sugar-plums every time it cries for them, without any regard to the natural result on the health or culture of the child. The wise parent many a time must make the child suffer, even though his own heart may be wrung with a pain that is keener than that which he inflicts.

Now let us look at the nature of God as we think of him as related to this problem of the control of the world. It seems to me that a large part of our difficulty springs out of what is really a childish, story-book style of looking at the world. We take it for granted, most thoughtlessly as I believe, that, if God would, he could make a world that would be a fairy bower, in which everybody would have all they wanted, enjoy all that they desired, pass through a career that seemed inviting to them, and, when they had attained the end of all they cared for, like prince and princess in the fairy tale, "live happily ever after." We take it thoughtlessly for granted that, if God only chose to make a world like this, and people it with beings like this, he might.

Let us see a moment. Are there any limitations to omnipotence? Can God do anything that he pleases or that we may think he ought to please? We are aware of certain things which in their very nature are absurd, and have no relation to the question of any power he may be supposed to exercise. God could not make a river without banks to enclose the water, because the banks are a part of the definition of a river. He could not make a valley with the mountains on one side only; for, unless there is an elevation on both sides, it would be no valley. He could not make a disc without the limit of a circle enclosing it. It would be

no disc; and God could not break a circle at any point and still have it complete. God could not make our bodies after a certain idea, constructed after a certain pattern, related to the forces around us in a certain way, and then have those bodies complete and perfect, without any regard to the question whether their limitations and laws were regarded. All this, you will see, is absurd. God could not make a hundred-year-old oak in five minutes. He could not transport us from Boston to New York without our passing over the distance that separates the two cities. These physical things in their very nature are absurd and impossible. They have no relation to the question of omnipotence. Are there no such absurdities in the realm of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual? We shall see as we turn to the human side that there are just such absurdities in this kind of childish dream which we have of a perfect world. Let us turn, then, to that human side, so that we may learn whether the kind of world we dream of is a possibility.

Let us first ask what is the real end and aim of human life. I frankly confess to you that I believe that the end and aim of life in this world and in all worlds can be nothing else but happiness. Feeling is deeper than thought, feeling is higher than thought. No man ever yet, since the world began, made any motion except under the impulse of feeling. No man ever attempted to do or attain anything except under the motive force of feeling. The desire for happiness is the universal motive of human action, and must be in the nature of things. Not that a man must necessarily seek happiness this moment. He may choose pain as an immediate thing, but always with the thought that this pain is to issue some time, somewhere, in larger good for himself or for others; that is, in human happiness. There can be no other ultimate for a human life than this. I cannot

spend any more time in enforcement or illustration of this idea. Think of it yourself, and see if you can find any exception to the statement.

What is happiness? How shall man attain it? Happiness is nothing more nor less than a pleasurable or agreeable feeling which accompanies the exercise of any faculty or power. If a man be in health, the performance of any natural function administers pleasure to him. If there is any pain, it means always and everywhere that something is wrong. If a man be in perfect health, simply to breathe the air is a delight to him. Even to see the blue sky or the stars at night may be an ecstasy; to feel the winds fan his cheek may be an inspiration. If breathing the air or looking at the light or feeling the wind gives pain, it means disease or something wrong. Pain means evil always, and happiness means always good.

Now, then, how shall this happiness be attained? If there be pleasure in the exercise of any faculty or in the performance of any function, then there will be more happiness, the more the faculties are increased and enlarged. Then, the more faculties one possesses in number and the loftier they are in degree and the wider in range, the more the capacity for happiness.

Take an illustration. You can get a certain tone that shall seem to you musical by touching one single string of a musical instrument; but do you not see what a difference there is between that tone and a whole orchestra, in quantity, in quality, in degree, and in range? A man who is uncivilized, who knows nothing except to eat and drink and sleep, is a harp with one or two strings. Whatever may enlarge him, broaden him, make him complete physically, develop his brain, his power of thought, until it touches all the magnificent phases of the natural universe, develop him

morally until he comes into sympathy with and rejoices or sorrows with all the rejoicing and sorrowing of all the world, develop him spiritually until he finds himself akin to the infinite and eternal Spirit that breathes through all things, this will have changed him from an instrument with only two strings to an orchestra, played on by all the world, capable of the happiness that results from this infinity of development, of contact with the infinity of things.

If, then, you will make a man capable of all the happiness that is possible to a man, you must develop him, you must broaden him, deepen him, lift him, until you make of him all that is possible to press into the definition of a man.

Is there any question as to the degrees of happiness? If there is a man who chooses to become intoxicated, and finds his highest pleasure in that, it may be impossible for you to prove to him that there is any higher pleasure in the world than that. But any man that is capable of a higher pleasure does not need to have it proved to him: he knows it, he feels it, he thrills with the inspiration and the aspiration of these higher things.

Now, then,— you see I am leading you over the straightest road that I am acquainted with, to the answer to the question,— if the object of human life be happiness, why is it that God has permitted us to go through so much unhappiness? I am ready with what seems to me the answer. I do not believe that, in the nature of things, the Omnipotent can help it: it is no question of power. It is absurd in the nature of things to suppose it could be otherwise.

Let me see if I can make this plain by one or two examples. For a man to become a man, he must know, he must be educated. He must be developed mentally for him to become all that it is possible for him to be. Man, to start with, is a finite being, ignorant; and, of course, he must know

through the process of learning. Now consider a moment. Would it be possible for God to make a man already wise, without his going through the experience of learning? What do we mean by knowledge? What do we mean by learning? We mean simply those conclusions and those inferences, those thoughts, those convictions, to which a man comes as the result of experience. Can a man have experience without experience? It is a contradiction in terms and an absurdity on the face of it. It seems to me in the very nature of things impossible that God should create any finite being all wise, without his going through the process of learning,—just as absurd as to suppose God creating a hundred-year-old oak without the oak starting as a seedling, without its laughing in the sunshine, wrestling with the storm, and playing with the raindrops through a hundred years. This is what knowledge means. Knowledge means experience, or conclusions at which we arrive as the result of experience. And I believe that there is not an angel in heaven, though we dream of a million such, who is any wiser than an infant child, unless he has gone through the probation of experience which implies error, mistake, correction, and finding out the truth by the processes of making mistakes and correcting them.

Take the question of goodness. Do you think it would be possible for God to make a man perfectly good, virtuous, clear in his thought concerning right and wrong, established in the right as the result of a conviction that it is best, and all without any experience? Again, it seems to me an absurdity on the very face of it. How do we know that right is right and wrong is wrong, except by trying? How can any one ever discover, except by this process of trying? And so I believe that all of the sin, all of the wrong, all of the crime of all the world, is nothing more or less than the results of

the experiences of ignorant, undeveloped characters living freely and learning the laws of life by living.

Suppose God wished to save us all trouble: he could do it only by keeping us perpetually children. Take one of your own little children. Follow it all the time, watch over it constantly; if it comes to a little obstacle, lift it over; never allow it to make any physical or mental effort; tell it the answer to any problem it may have at school; save it all effort, all care, all trouble of any kind,—what would be the result? Simply a grown-up infancy instead of a man or a woman. Suppose God should undertake to save us from all pain, from all disaster, all misfortune, all sorrow, in this world: it would be only a world full of grown-up infants, instead of strong, clear-headed, noble-hearted men and women who had wrought out the results of character through the medium of experience.

Let us glance for a moment at some of those great indictments, and see how they look to us in the light of these thoughts, which I cannot unfold as they deserve, for lack of time.

People make a great point against the goodness of God in the fact that there are such things as cyclones and earthquakes, storms at sea and pestilence. But what are these? What is an earthquake? An earthquake is nothing but an incident in the natural and necessary growth of the planet as it is becoming fitted to maintain life, a little tremor in the crust of the earth as it is shrinking while it is going through the cooling process which is necessary to fit it to be the abode of man. So far as we can see, God could not prevent this and such things as this without a perpetual series of miracles. In the first place, these great forces that sweep around the world, that cause the disasters that seem to appall us, are processes in the natural life of the world.

Remember that these forces are at work every moment of every day, of every month, of every year, and have been for ages. The same forces are at work all the time. The forces that bring disaster and death are the ones that produce all the good and beauty and glory of life; and the evils that result from their operations are mathematically almost as nothing when compared to the infinite, unspeakable, eternal good which these same forces produce. As I said, these incidental evils could not be prevented without a perpetual series of miracles. If God should govern the world in this way, the evils that would result from our not being able to calculate on the order of nature would infinitely overbalance the good. We should be demanding of God that which would result in greater evil in order to prevent a lesser.

Learning how to adjust ourselves to these great forces is a part of human education, a necessary part of all human development. Take disease and pain. I think, if you will study the problem of pain carefully, you will find it is always tenderness and mercy. Pain is simply a signal set up on the outer limits of what is safe. It tells us when to stop. When we go beyond that, we suffer. If we kept within the limits of the laws of God perfectly, there would be no pain. There could be none. Pain, then, is only this signal which the kindness, wisdom, and goodness of God sets up to keep us within the limits of the laws of life.

Let us look at the grand dissatisfactions of life, the unattained ideals, the dreams unfulfilled, the baffled hopes,— what do they mean? Think a little deeply, and do not get lost in a superficial view of things. The fact that men and women are beings that this world has never been able to satisfy,— what does it mean? It is the most magnificent promise and prophecy that God ever vouchsafed out of his

merciful heavens. It means the grandeur of human nature. Suppose we could be satisfied with little, ordinary, cheap, commonplace comfort as we go through the world: would it not mean that we were beings capable only of that? What does it mean when we see Newton standing on the outermost verge of his life, and saying of all the achievement of his years that he felt he was only a little child playing with pebbles on the seashore, having gathered a few brighter and fairer ones than others had discovered? Nothing less than the touch of the infinite in this poor, petty, commonplace humanity of ours! It means that we are but a little lower than the angels, that we are sons and daughters of God, and capable of an infinite expansion, an endless career.

One word at the close — it needs but one — on this great fact of death. Is death an impeachment of the divine mercy and love? That all depends. If any one can prove to me that there is nothing beyond, that the world falls into an abyss, that nothing is the end, then he may have made a point. But, at present, no one is able to prove that death is anything more than an incident in human growth. For aught anybody knows, it is only another birth, only the opening of a doorway to let us through into something grander and higher. Death, for all that the wisest on earth may know, is the tenderest, kindest, most loving gift of an all-loving heavenly Father.

MORAL FOUNDATIONS.

In the midst of the transitions and changes which are felt in the regions of our religious thought and life there is great danger that people will believe that the fundamental principles of right and wrong are being shaken, or at any rate obscured. Sometimes, a vine growing vigorously from its own root twines itself for support in the air around the trunk and limbs of a tree. It has an independent life of its own, but it seems to be dependent upon this which it has made its temporary support. After a time, the tree grows old, begins to decay, shows signs of weakening, until there is danger that the first storm will rock it down, perhaps breaking and endangering the vine in its fall. It is needful to remove the tree which has been for a time an artificial support. Many persons, looking on and seeing how intimately the two are linked together, may feel that the tree is an essential part of the life of the vine, and that the one cannot be taken away without seriously injuring the other. Yet the danger of a fall threatens, and the process must be carried out.

I take it that there are thousands of people in the world, to-day, who are bitterly opposing light and freedom and discussion in matters of religion, chiefly because they fear that speculation in this direction seriously endangers the fundamental moral principles which underlie the daily life of the world. They have been taught for ages that the principal reasons for conduct were faith in this or that dogma of the-

ology, in this or that institute of religion. They fight earnestly, desperately, against those who attack or attempt to remove these artificial and temporary supports of morals, as though they were the enemies of the moral life of the world. But there is no sort of question in the minds of intelligent, thoughtful people that these religious institutions of the past and these theological dogmas of the olden time, although morality may have twined its tendrils about them, are growing old, decaying, and becoming ready to fall. They need to be removed, they must be removed; and the moral principles of human life must be shown to be capable of rooting themselves in their own soil, growing up in their own air, living, flourishing, bearing fruit by virtue of their inherent divine life and power.

We have been taught for ages that the principal reasons for conduct were derived from supernatural authority,— now the authority of a church, now the authority of a book,— but in any case that there was no natural, inherent, necessary reason for pursuing this course rather than that, apart from the fact that God through some channel had commanded thus and so.

The very first story we read as children, in our Bibles, enforces this old lesson. The newly made pair are placed in the garden of Eden. God issues a command,— the first divine command in history,— that they are not to touch the fruit of a certain tree. There is no inherent, necessary evil in the fruit of this tree. Adam and Eve might have eaten to their hearts' content, so far as the story goes, if God had not chosen arbitrarily to tell them that they must not, and that, if they did, he would inflict a certain penalty. This first teaching of the Bible concerning right and wrong is that right and wrong are purely arbitrary matters, dependent exclusively upon the arbitrary command of an external

power. God has been represented in this way as a king sitting outside of this little kingdom of earth. He is made to legislate according to his own will. The laws of God, in other words, have not been supposed to be a part of the nature of things, springing out of the earth and having relations to our conceptions of body, brain, heart, and soul, but as purely arbitrary laws as any that the General Court might pass during one of its winter sessions in the State House.

To make this evil all the greater,— for I hold and will try to show you before I am through that it is an evil,— this world has been pictured in the religious writings of men as a place full of all possible delights, a garden where are beautiful flowers, luscious fruits, tempting perfumes, but everywhere lurking dangers,— a serpent beneath every flower, poison in the luscious juices of all the fruits, death threatening everywhere, if any one chooses to carry out his own will and lives according to his own desire. The broad way, supposed to be trodden by the great masses of men, has ever been pictured as a place where alluring, tempting, beautiful forms are represented as dancing along its broad pathway, with music and flowing drapery, alluring visions of loveliness. The great masses of men have been pictured as following after these tempting forms; and all has been supposed to be well, except that at the end there was a gulf, and that God had threatened to inflict arbitrary and endless torture on all who walked this flowery way. On the other hand, the path of righteousness, the way of virtue, truth, and right, has been pictured as narrow, steep, and hard.

Pleasure, in popular religious belief, has been combined with doing wrong. Evil has been pointed out as being a "primrose path of dalliance," right as a rugged, hard way. Only God had chosen that those who walked this hard way

now, depriving themselves of pleasure and enjoyment, should by and by be rewarded with unspeakable joys in another life; and those who chose to be happy now, should be rewarded — or punished rather — with the opposite, when this life had come to an end. This, I say, has been the popular conception. This has been the picture drawn from the pulpit, written in books, held up to the imagination of men. Right and wrong have been treated as purely arbitrary things, that miht have been something else if God had chosen to issue another kind of law.

The reason for our supposing that we must deny ourselves all pleasure, and walk in this rough, hard way of life, and look for our reward only in another sphere, has been the supposed divine authority of a church, a book, that has said that such is God's will. Do you wonder that after ages of teaching like this, when men and women come at last to doubt the reality of this supposed divine authority, either the church or book, there is a tremendous reaction, a turning of the tide in another direction? Do you wonder that there is danger of what Mr. Goldwin Smith has already pointed out as imminent,—a moral interregnum; that people should be confused in their opinions of right and wrong, and wonder whether there are any real, permanent, eternal distinctions; whether, after all, they are not a mere matter of opinion, changing, fluctuating, one thing in this age and another in the next? A spectacle like this we do see, at any rate; and it seems to me a very natural result by way of reaction from this old teaching.

Only a little while ago, a lady called on me to converse concerning her own anxiety over some young men, friends of hers, who were enunciating the principles of what they regarded as the new philosophy of life, springing out of the decay of these old external authorities, and the natural

result, as they seemed to believe, of the science of evolution. They said : If you go far enough back, you find a time when slavery was a good thing : it was an improvement on what had been the social condition. Slavery then was a virtue. The condition of things has changed a little ; and now we regard it as a vice. But it is all a matter of time, of the difference in civilization : there is no essential, no eternal distinction. There was a time in the history of the world when polygamy was a distinct and definite advance in social relations. So polygamy became a virtue ; and, under certain other changes, it might again become a good thing. That is the logic they use. Virtue and vice, they say, are only matters of convention, so far as we understand it. It all depends on the opinion of the people in the midst of whom you live, on that which is regarded as respectable. And they carry it so far as to say : Suppose we do gamble a little, and suppose people find it out, it does not make any difference in our social standing. We are received in good society just the same. Our friends do not look upon it as such a bad thing, after all. We are fairly good-looking, well educated, our social position is fine ; we are successful in business, or our fathers have been ; we are good company, good society. We would be, either of us, a good "catch" for a mother looking out for some one to marry her daughter. Suppose there are these little things about us that the stricter moralists of the world look upon askance ; suppose we do transgress and break over : what difference does it make, so long as our social standing is unaffected by it and our friends do not turn us out of their society ? Besides, a future life is all uncertain. The old threat of hell has turned into a bugaboo, to which no brave man pays any attention. What reason is there why we should not do as we please ?

This is the kind of reasoning that many are engaged in at the present time. It seems to me it is worth our while, then, to raise the question whether there are distinctions between right and wrong, whether they are essential, whether they are permanent and clear. Let us find out where we are, what we are doing, which way lies the path of right, if there be any such path, what is the unsafe and wrong.

There is just enough truth in this kind of fallacious reasoning to which I have been referring to make it easy for people to be led astray by it. There was a time when slavery was a distinct and definite advance on the preceding social conditions of the world,— when, relatively, it was good. There was a time when polygamy was an advance ; and, relatively, it was good. There have been times in the history of the world when a war was better than peace in the existing conditions. But here is where the fallacy is to be found. They say right and wrong are only relative things, relative to the changing whims and fancies of the world. Right and wrong are relative things; but they are relative, not to the changing whims and fancies of the world, but to the changing conditions of human life and the changing needs of a growing society. The principles of right and wrong are eternal, as eternal as that Power that makes for righteousness. The application changes infinitely with the changing conditions of men and women. It is, for example, the duty of one man always, so far as he can, to help another man. But what particular thing shall constitute that help will, of course, be purely relative to the man's condition and his need at the time. The principles, then, I say, we shall find are changeless and eternal.

Now let us raise the question as to what we mean by right and wrong. What is a virtue? What is a vice? Right, virtue, and all kindred terms are nothing more nor

less than ideas, words, by which we represent the truth which has been wrought out by human experience,— that certain kinds of thinking, certain ways of feeling, certain methods of conduct, are helpful to man, and that others are hurtful. Right is that which helps the life; which makes it fuller and deeper, higher and broader; which makes one more of a man in every way; which helps society; which makes for health, for life, for growth, for happiness.

Evil, vice, wrong, are those kinds of thought, those types of feeling, those courses of conduct, which hurt the world; which take away from its life, fulness, height, depth, breadth; which diminish the power of men and women to develop, to grow, to become more; which interfere with their happiness. There are eternal distinctions, wherever you may draw the lines in practice.

Now, a large part of the confusion, a large part of this fallacious reasoning that I have referred to, springs out of the fact that there have been in the history of the world, from the beginning, two classes of thoughts and feelings and actions which have been looked upon as virtuous and right, two classes which have been looked upon as evil and wrong. One class is conventional: the other class is real. In order that we may pursue our way with clear thought and know where we are, we need to draw very clearly this distinction between the conventional virtues and the real ones, that we may know where the emphasis of our lives ought to be laid.

If you read the history of any religion,— for this is not confined to Christianity,— you will find that there has been this distinction between conduct and character among men, as they have been variously related to each other. There are thoughts and feelings and courses of actions that turn on what society may say; and there is a feeling that some power, God or gods, outside of human society, demands

certain beliefs, certain feelings, certain actions, from men, that have no necessary relation to human welfare. Many a time, these supposed virtues and rights have been looked upon as more important than those which had a real and direct bearing on human well-being.

As an illustration of what I mean, go back to Jerusalem, to Jesus' preaching. Do you not remember how he brings it as a charge against the pious people of his time that they were very careful about their tithes of mint and anise and cumin; very careful about attending to the services of the temple and synagogue, about what sort of religious robes they wore, their phylacteries, their garments, the width of the borders, the way they were made and decorated; but, he said, while you pay such scrupulous attention to these things, you neglect the weightier matters of the law,— justice, truth, righteousness?

Go back to Athens, and stand for a moment beside Socrates, and those that are putting him to death because he has broken this conventional, unreal law of right, in the interest of that which really touched human well-being and progress. They are putting him to death for his very virtues, condemning him in the light of the conventional virtue which he disregarded, and punishing him for the help he was rendering to his fellow-man.

Come down to Boston thirty years ago, and see the same principle at work,— Theodore Parker outcast, opposed by those who should have been his friends. Why? Because he dared to say certain things against the popular superstitious ideas about the Bible, concerning the character and rank of Jesus of Nazareth; and all the time he was standing, as no other man of his age did stand, for real righteousness, for love, for justice, for human help. These as illustrations of this division that runs down the ages and cleaves in two

every religion between the conventional and the real right and wrong.

Do you not know to-day that you would be more seriously condemned by the popular opinion of a large section of Boston for breaking over some conventional rule or statute or law than you would be for being hard-hearted or unkind, or for refusing to help a friend in trouble, for declining to live out the real virtue of human life? A friend of mine, a teacher in one of Boston's public schools, said in my house within a year, her sister having died recently, that she was afraid God had taken her sister away from her because she had not attended church more frequently during Lent. Think of it! God a kind of being who kills our friends because we do not go to church in Lent!

We need, then, to draw these distinctions very clearly, and so be rid of a large part of the confusion that attaches itself to this subject. The conventional rights and wrongs, virtues and vices, are and must be whims, changing with climate, people, city, town, clique, class, for the simple reason that they are airy nothings, having no real power, no real existence, no real value. But the real virtues and vices of the world inhere in the very nature of things, and are eternal and changeless. Ralph Waldo Emerson has somewhere said — I quote only the thought — that the moral law is one with gravitation. The real laws of right and wrong are just as much a part of the nature of things as is gravitation,— quite as universal, quite as changeless, quite as eternal.

I said a moment ago that virtue, goodness, right, were only words for the conditions of existence, of life, growth, happiness. Let us see. We shall find this principle true from the lowest up to the highest. I wish to touch on a few illustrative examples.

Everything that exists is conditioned, outlined, by certain

limits which make it what it is and keep it from being anything else. Suppose you stand by the borders of a lake. What is a lake? It is a basin of water. Suppose an earthquake should break down one side, so that the water should all run out: would it be a lake any longer? You have broken the conditions of a lake; and it ceases to be one. What is a circle? It is a line every point of which is at the same distance from a point within it called the centre. Suppose you change that, and have some part of the circle not the same distance from the centre as the other parts. Have you a circle any longer? You have broken the conditions of the existence of a circle; and it ceases to be. Do you not begin to gain a glimpse of that old law enunciated by the prophet, which lies at the basis of this whole discussion,—"The soul that sinneth it shall die"? Death is the penalty, the eternal, inexorable penalty of wrong, in the very nature of things,—not because any God has threatened to punish.

Go up a little higher, above these inanimate things. Go out into your garden in the spring, and look at a rosebush. What is a rosebush? A certain kind of bush that will grow in a certain kind of soil, that puts forth a certain kind of buds that unfold into a certain kind of blossom, with a perfume of its own. Change the conditions on which a rose is dependent; and, though something else may live, unless you obey the laws of the life of the rose's being, it will cease to be.

Come up to man. Our bodies are what they are because they are constituted according to certain conditions. At every single point of these bodies, external and internal, there is an inexorable law that conditions it and makes it what it is. Break the laws of physical life and health,—though the body will endure a great deal,—and break them often enough, and continue it long enough, and there is sickness,

and, a little later, death. Can you help it? Could God help it? Could any omnipotent power constitute a body so that it could be a body and not be a body at the same time; so that it could have health on certain conditions, and not have it on the same conditions; so that it could live and not live at the same time? Health is conditioned on these things; and Omnipotence itself cannot change the law.

Come up into the region of the brain, the intellect. Here, again, on certain conditions, on certain uses of the brain, you can make it an organ for the discovery and the verification of truth, so that you shall live in a world of truth and reality. But break over the laws of the mind, and can you have a man that shall live in the world of reality? It is absurd on the face of it.

But look at the same thought in regard to the higher nature, the moral, spiritual nature of man; and right means simply that course of action which keeps us within the limits of the laws of life as they exist in the very nature of things. As I had occasion to say to you last Sunday, just in so far as we keep within these limits and develop ourselves according to these conditions of health, just as we become more and more, broader, deeper, higher, just in so far do we become capable of grander, nobler happiness, because we have more faculties, functions, to exercise; and, exercising them healthfully and according to their nature, the natural result is the music of joy.

The penalty, then, of all transgression is, first, illness and disorder, and this, carried far enough, death. There needs no external law. There needs no God sitting on a throne to execute moral laws. There needs no hell in the next world any more than there is in this. It is only a carrying out of the same principle in any world and in any time. The real, the essential laws of right and wrong are self-existent and

self-executing; and he who fancies he can break over these laws of right and truth and escape the penalty is fancying that he can outwit the Eternal by achieving an absurdity that is beyond the power of Omnipotence itself.

But, now, let us look at one or two practical phases of this subject. It has passed into a proverb that a man who wishes to succeed in this world can do it by cultivating a hard head and a hard heart. The man who listens to the difficulties of the world, its wants and sorrows, who gives freely on every hand, who suffers as others suffer, who feels the touch of human sympathy at every hour of every day, who cannot bear to let people go their own ways, however hard those ways may be,— he is not the man who most readily gets rich. The man who chooses to keep merely within the limits of the law, working night and day to attain his ends, refusing the calls of charity, who does not try to help his fellows, but looks out merely for himself,— this man will of course save more money, get rich in a shorter time than the man who pursues an opposite course. But does he suffer no penalty? He suffers the penalty of ceasing to be a man. He suffers the penalty of paying for this lower type of success all that is noblest and highest in him. If a man chooses to live in the basement of his house, perhaps you cannot induce him to go upstairs; and he may after a while forget that there is any upstairs, and be quite satisfied with the coal-bin and the kitchen, simply feeding his animal wants. But do you not see that the man who pursues that course of life becomes atrophied in all the higher faculties of his being? He degrades himself to the level of a merely animal life. He may succeed in becoming a rich animal; but he is not a rich man, unless heart and brain, kindliness, love, justice, truth, charity, are also equally developed in his nature.

But the question is sometimes raised whether a man is

really punished, or needs to pay attention to punishment, if he does not consciously suffer, if he does not feel bad about it. If a man has no conception of anything higher, and you cannot convince him that there is anything higher, I do not know what motive force you can bring to bear upon him to change his method of thinking and his course of life; but every physician knows that, when a man's body is diseased in such a way that it ceases to be sensitive to pain, he has reached a point that is fatal. So long as there is a keen sensitiveness to suffering, it shows that the body is alive. The forces of life are strong in it still, and it may have the power to recuperate. But, when a man reaches the point that he no longer suffers with the disease, then the physician gives him up. Nothing waits him but death. If you cannot prove to a man that it is a very bad thing to be in that condition of insensibility to his life, you can only look upon him from a higher level, and pity him.

It is sometimes urged against our liberal thought that we have no such mighty motives to bring to bear on people as the hell which we have repudiated; and people say, You cannot get along without hell, you need it as a moral motive. I could the more readily believe that, provided history had shown us that this threat of hell had been effective in making people any better in the olden time than they are now. But, as a matter of fact, when everybody believed it so thoroughly that never a doubt or question was raised, people were not better than they are to-day. They were not so good. The supposed tremendous motive force of a belief in hell was lost by the ease with which the Church made a way for them to escape.

Take one more illustration. Suppose a man goes out into the world with the theory that he is going to do just as he pleases. He will be practical, shrewd, wise. He will not

run the risk of getting into the clutches of the law; for that would defeat his purposes. He means to maintain a certain average of respectability. He knows that he would lose more than he would gain by losing the countenance of his fellow-men; but, within these limits, he proposes to indulge himself in every way, satisfy every whim and every desire. He says there is no danger of any future punishment, and this matter of right and wrong is all a matter of whim, changed by conditions of climate. What would be the result?

If he does wrong,— that is, if he lowers, degrades, his own life; if he takes away from the sum total of the life of some other person in the gratification of his own indulgence; if he degrades another life, and makes it less capable of growth in all that is noble and true; if he takes away from the sum total of human welfare; if he lowers the level of the virtuous power and impulse of his time, and puts farther away the day of human triumph over evil, the day when it shall be trodden under foot,— what does he do? He degrades himself first, takes away from his own life. If he carries it far enough, he will produce physical death. If he carries it not so far as that, he may produce moral, spiritual death, leaving himself only animal. As regards his fellow-men, what does he become? He becomes precisely what this very man in a business career becomes,— one who preys like a parasite, a thief, on the health, the well-being, the happiness, of others, merely for the gratification of his own desires.

Right means life, health, happiness, as you go along. And if there be, as I firmly believe, another career, of which death is the gateway; and if we enter on it what we have made ourselves here (for every thought, impulse, action, leaves its impress upon us),— then we cripple ourselves — for who knows how many ages? Though the doom of salvation be upon us, how many years of weary struggle, toil, and

climbing may be needed to retrieve a fault,— the folly, the blindness, of that selfishness which in this world we thought would bring happiness in some other way than that ordained by the very conditions of our natures? The result of our actions, good and bad, must follow us. It makes us: it makes others. And it is ordained forever in the nature of things that not the end only, but the way, of transgressors is hard. All history teaches it. It is ordained that not the end simply of the path of right and wisdom is pleasantness and peace; but the way of Wisdom as we go along is blessedness, and all her paths are peace.

Communion of the Finite with the Infinite.

It is very strange the way people sometimes hear! I say, for example, I do not believe in certain ideas concerning prayer, and go on to explain, as clearly as I know how with my mastery of English, precisely what I mean. But it is not long before a strange and curious echo comes back to me; and I hear that some one has been saying: "Why, what an irreligious sort of man this is! He does not believe in prayer at all."

Again, I say I do believe in certain ideas of prayer; and once more, with such mastery of English as I have, I explain as clearly as I know how, precisely what I mean. And once more it is not long before another echo comes back to me, and some one has been saying, "Why, here is a man who claims to be a liberal, who claims to be guided by the scientific method in his investigations of truth, and yet who adopts and holds and practises all these old, strange, superstitious notions about prayer!" I sometimes wish that, even if there can be no better language than English to speak in, there might be a clearer one for people to hear in.

I propose this morning, as well as I can in the time allowed me, to traverse this whole great subject of the relation between the finite and the Infinite. Of course, you will see that I cannot possibly find time to demonstrate each

position that I take. If you care to look back over what I have said in years gone by, you will find a good many strong reasons given already for some of the things that I shall say; and you will give me credit, I trust, for thinking, at any rate, that I could give strong reasons for all that I shall say, if I had only time. I shall endeavor to say nothing that does not seem to me to be perfectly consistent with the best knowledge as well as the noblest instincts and aspirations of the world.

I do not believe in the old, common, popular ideas about prayer: that God is a being who needs to be teased into giving us things; that God is a being who does not know what we want; that God is a being who might possibly forget, if we did not remind him; or that he is a being who has any favorite at court, either on earth or in heaven, through whose mediatorship or intercession we can gain one slightest request that he would not grant us, just because he is God and we are his needy children. I do not believe that he is a being who interferes with his own working, that he unravels with one hand what he is perpetually weaving with the other. I do not believe that he constantly interferes with nature, working a perpetual series of miracles. These things I do not believe. My first doubt, my first question, concerning this whole matter of prayer and communion between the finite soul and the Infinite, sprang out of the large faith and trust that I had in his infinite goodness. I could not believe that he was a being who needed to be approached in the way that was set forth and illustrated in the ordinary examples with which I was familiar.

To illustrate what I mean. I used to be a very constant attendant at prayer-meeting, even before it became my duty to take charge of such meetings every week in the year. But what did I see? Men and women, simple in their faith,

earnest and true. What were they doing? The implications of their attitude toward God seemed to me nothing less than impious. They begged, they prayed, they petitioned, even with tears; and the implication of it all the time was that, if only they could become earnest enough, sufficiently wrought upon, or if they could bring to bear upon God sufficient power, they would wake him up, rouse his attention, start his inactivity, get him to do something. Men prayed and pleaded for their children as though, if they could only make God understand how much they really loved them, he would hear. Men prayed for the salvation of the heathen as though God had forgotten that he had any children in India, Africa, and the islands of the sea, and if they could only make him remember it, and only prayed hard enough and long enough, he would send them a little light; he would find some way by which at least a few of these millions of souls, that were pouring like a Niagara flood over into the abyss, might be saved, evaporated into the skies to shine as a part of his rainbow glory.

Now all this seems to me distinctly and definitely not pious. Whether I am right or wrong, it seems impious. I remember when this feeling first swept over me and these thoughts were fresh in my mind. I was discussing the question with a lady, a member of my church in the West; and I said to her: "Just think of it! What would you say if I should come to you and with tears plead, beg, entreat you to love your own children and be kind to them; not to let them go cold; not to let them go hungry; to teach them, so that they would not grow up ignorant,— to be, in short, a decent mother to those you love as you love your own life,— what would you say? Would you not say I was insulting?" So this kind of prayer seems to me little else than insulting to our Father who is in heaven. If he be our Father, then he

needs not that kind of prayer. If he be not, then is our breath wasted, as if blown against the wind. If he be a God who could be thus persuaded into doing things for one of his children that he is not inclined to do for another, then I, for one, would not ask a favor at his hands, nor take it, were it offered.

There was another difficulty that presented itself to me. Not only God's goodness cried out against that kind of praying, but God's wisdom as well. It seemed to me so egotistical that we, with our little, short-sighted wisdom, should attempt perpetual dictation as to how the affairs of this universe should be carried on. Then, not only the absurdity of the prayers, but the utter impossibility of their being answered,— a large part of them,— came over me. Here, for example, is a man who has a farm that is made up of sandy soil that needs a great deal of rain, that dries up rapidly, and very naturally he anxiously desires in a certain part of the season that it should rain; and he prays for it. Another man in the same town has a farm made up of different soil, low-lying, wet ground; and what he needs above all is sunshine. Perhaps the man with the dry soil, who wants the rain, has already gathered in his crop of hay; while the other man's is lying out, needing to be dried and fitted for the barn. Suppose these two men pray for what they want: can Almighty Power work a contradiction, and have a rainstorm and sunshine and dry weather at the same time?

Or suppose a shipmaster is sailing from this country towards Europe, and wishes a wind to blow him on his voyage. Precisely at the same time, a man is sailing from Europe on his way here, and wants a contrary wind. Both of them are praying men, both of them believe that God will grant the things that they desire; but can Omnipotence make a wind blow east and blow west, along the same line, at the same time?

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We have learned in this modern world that this universe is subject to law; but, mark you, we are not to think of it as a mechanism, a machine apart from God, with which he might interfere, making it run some other than the natural way. Neither are we to think of it as a mechanism so mighty and so vast that God cannot interfere with it. We who talk about the regularity and order of natural force are perpetually being misrepresented in this. People say that we hold the position that nature is a mechanism so hard and fast, so fixed, that God cannot interfere with its working; that, if there be a God, he has constructed a machine that is mightier than he is. Of course, that is nonsense; but what we do hold is this: that the on-going of this natural force is the very presence and manifest power and working of God.

I remember, some years ago, hearing one very strong argument, or that was intended to be very strong, in favor of God's being able to answer prayer without working a miracle. It was brought out at length and illustrated by Dr. Mark Hopkins, then President of Williams College, a noble man and famous scholar. He started with this idea, which is familiar to all of us, that we are capable of interfering with the order of nature. Men, we know, divert the course of a stream, making it run in another channel, and do not break any natural law in so doing. We can develop and apply the force of electricity; but we do not break any natural law in so doing. We simply avail ourselves of our knowledge of natural law so as to produce results which nature, not thus interfered with by the intelligence of man, would never produce. Dr. Hopkins argues, if we are able to do this, surely God ought to be able to do it. He might be able to work upon these natural forces about us in such a way as to produce the answer to our prayer, not by any interference

with natural law, but simply by the use of this natural force. This would be a conclusive answer to the objection, were it not that the most important thing in the whole discussion has been overlooked. If God were a being outside of and separate from these natural forces, as we are, then we might think of him as working upon them as we can and producing results that would not otherwise be produced. But, when we remember that these natural forces that make up what we call the mechanism of the universe are the very presence and power and working of God, then you see the comparison that was attempted to be drawn between our interference and his interference fails, and becomes of no avail. These natural forces are the manifest presence, the vital, throbbing, thrilling, pulsing life of God. And can he interfere with himself, or will he be likely to? If he does a certain thing under certain conditions, he does it because that is the best and the wisest thing under those conditions. And the next time, when precisely the same conditions exist, he will do precisely the same, because he did the best thing the first time; and he cannot do a different thing without doing something which is not the best. It is then in the wisdom and the love of God that we find the basis for the universal unchangeableness of what we call natural law. It is perfectly easy for us to see that, if it were not for this uniformity, we would be disturbed in our calculations, upset in all our arrangements at every turn. Knowledge would be impossible, forethought as to to-morrow or next week would be out of the question. It is only because we can count on water's freezing under similar conditions every time, on iron's melting under certain conditions every time, on the absolute, perfect uniformity of nature, that it is possible for us to know anything, that it is possible for us to build up our grand civilization. This is not only the foundation of our

trust in God, but the foundation of science, of all the material enterprises of the world. They are all based on this fact,—that God is without variableness or shadow of turning.

Passing from this division of my theme, I wish to indicate to you a few reasons why I believe it is possible that there should be something even better than this old idea of begging for things, in the relations which exist between us and God.

I believe in prayer. Of course I believe in prayer. I think no sane man, who understands the meaning of the word and who considers carefully what he is talking about, can fail to say the same. I believe in prayer for two great reasons. First, I believe in God. I believe that we are in the presence of an infinite, eternal, wise, loving Power. I believe that we are his children. I believe that you will all accept the fact, the moment it is stated, that the very definition of prayer shows that all of us pray, whether we think of it or not; and we could not help it if we tried.

What do we mean ordinarily by the word "prayer"? We mean either writing or uttering a wish for something, directed, when we use the word "prayer," toward the universe, toward God, the spirit and life of things. Of course, you know that writing down a prayer or speaking it is no necessary part of it. When you analyze it, it is the wish, the desire for something, that is the essence of all prayer; and though your wish go out towards a fellow-man, or though it go out, so far as you are conscious, only into empty space, precisely as much as though you consciously asked of God for something, you know that every wish that is ever fulfilled finds its source of fulfilment in the ultimate Power and Life that I am speaking of when I say God. Whatever little brook you dip your cup into, that brook itself, no matter

what we name it, is fed from the far-off, infinite springs. Whatever carrier brings the thing you desire, it has its source in this same far-off, infinite spring of life and power. Every good gift and every perfect gift — *every gift* — ultimately cometh from the Father of Light. And every wish that seeks fulfilment, in spite of you even, is a prayer; and the answer comes from the one source from which comes the fulfilment of every desire. So you pray, and you cannot help praying.

But now I wish to speak of this in another and deeper way. I want you to feel with me, if possible, the reality of something in the nature of conscious communication between your soul and the Infinite Soul. Can we find any hint or glimpse of the basis for so sublime and grand a thing as this?

Let us look around us: what do we see? Whatever your theory of this universe may be, we know that it is one life and one power which is at the heart of all this infinite variety of manifestation. You may think of that Power as conscious or unconscious, good or bad. So far as the purpose of my argument is concerned, it makes no difference. There is one power, one infinite energy, at the heart of things, that is the source of all things. And this infinite energy is your father and your mother, my father and my mother. No matter by what process, the creative or the Darwinian; no matter whether born within a week or fifty years ago; no matter whether you trace your ancestry through six thousand years of human history or six million years; no matter what the mediate process may be,—you are a child of this Infinite Life. You have come out of it; and it has stamped your life with every feature which constitutes you what you are.

What then? We look at this universe, and try to unravel

this infinite mystery. We look at ourselves, and try to determine just what we are. Mystery still, both concerning God and man, and as much mystery about man as about God. Though you may think you know yourself or the person that sits next you this morning, you know God just as thoroughly and deeply as you know your next-door neighbor. But one thing is certain; and, that you may know I am not giving you only my own authority, I wish to quote a sentence or two bearing on these ideas. This is the final outcome, so far as the world's thought has gone, concerning this great mystery, if Herbert Spencer may be considered competent to speak for the ultimate result of scientific investigation. This is what he says: "Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that he [that is, each one of us] is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed."

And what of this Eternal Energy? What of its nature? The same authority pronounces this verdict: "The final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man is that the power manifested throughout the universe distinguished as material is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness."

That is, the final outcome, so far, of the profoundest, the deepest and most scientific study of the world, is the assertion of identity between the spirit and life of the universe and our spirit and life. And, if you cannot conceive, cannot picture to yourself God, or tell where he resides or what may be his form, can you picture your own thinking mind? Can you locate thought, can you outline it? Can you tell in what part of the body it inheres? And yet that we do think and feel and know is the one thing most certain of

all. I believe, with the old seers and poets of all time, that there is a life, a spirit, a presence in things outside of us, that answers to our life, our spirit, our presence, our thought, our feeling. In the childhood of the world, they broke this one spirit up into a multitude, placing a spirit in each tree, in the brook, in the wind, in the air, in the clouds. I think their only error was in this multiplicity of conception, not in the ultimate thought itself. I believe there is not *a* spirit in the tree and in the brook and in the cloud and the wind and the air, but that there *is spirit*, life, in all these,— the one spirit and life in all, of which the old psalmist sang, as he pictured the impossibility of our escaping the universal presence. Is it mere poetry when Byron sings,—

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal,
From all I may be or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal"?

Is it only poetry, again, when Wordsworth sings those words, fine as any poet ever uttered,—

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things"?

Is this only poetry? I believe that these poets are singing the same grand truth that Jesus uttered when he said, "I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent me."

If we study scientifically, deeply, philosophically, we find this to be true. This universe has produced us; and it calls out in us each one of our faculties, and matches us at every point. Wherever we study, we find a perfect intellectual order matching our intellect, only surpassing it on every hand. Wherever we study, we find a beauty challenging our sense of beauty, developing it, matching it at every point, only transcending it beyond the reach of our grandest fancy. We find in the mountain, in the sea, in the stars at night, a sublimity calling out in us the sense of the sublime. Did *we* put it there? I do not believe it. It is only the reflection of the infinite sublimity challenging our finite sense of the sublime, and lifting us into some little conception of itself. So, whichever way you turn, whatever faculties of men you speak of, you shall find something outside of men calling to that which has its fellow in men, echoing it, answering back again, and ever lifting it to some higher level of thought, some grander reach of imagination.

Here, then, in this likeness between the finite spirit and the Infinite, in the fact that it is our Father and Mother, and we are children in its presence,—here is ground for this communion grander than mere begging for things,—ground for prayer nobler than that which narrows itself down to petty petition. When we are grown up to spiritual manhood and womanhood, and have this sense of fellowship, kinship, communion, with our Father in heaven, is it not something better than the old, petty, child-world, barbaric idea? It was easy for men to believe in those old times in that mode of prayer. Their god was only a dead chief, perchance, with the same limitations and passions that

he had when living, only become somewhat grander and stronger, surrounded with awe because invisible and unknown. It was easy to believe that he might forget; that he might, as Elijah taunted the priests of Baal, be asleep; that he might need urging; that he might have some court favorite, whose interest, if it could be obtained, might get something done. Do you not see how the whole idea underlying this old method of petition springs from the frayed-out remnant of the notion that God is a kind of sultan, who has his vizier,—his favorite? The sultan himself is secluded and hard to get at; but, if you can only get some one to approach the vizier, interest him in the matter, why, then he will approach the sultan, who will do it for the sake of the favorite. He will not do it simply because it ought to be done. Do you not see how this sense of fellowship is something grander than that? When a boy grows up and becomes a young man, he begins to have a sense of fellowship with his father. He does not tease him now, like a little child, for things that he wants. He begins to trust his father, his older experience, his knowledge of the world,—begins to take comfort in his presence and in talking things over with him, to understand that his father is watching over his life, thinking of him all the time, glad to do everything he can for him, and wishing even that he might do more. He knows that he does not forget, that he does not overlook these things. He enjoys this communion; and does he not feel that it is a nobler, a more satisfying thing than was that merely childish relation, when he used to tease and tease until the father, merely to get rid of him, would buy the tin rattle for the boy? And is not this a nobler thought of the Infinite? Is not this a nobler thought of communion between the child and the father than the other?

What, then, do I believe that is practical concerning prayer to-day? What satisfaction do I find in this sense of communion with God?

Let me give you two or three hints. In the first place, it is infinite, unspeakable comfort and help to me to believe, as I do with my whole soul, that, though I am on a ship out at sea, though I do not know what port the ship sailed from, though I do not know definitely what harbor it will finally reach, still there is One at the helm that does know, and that he is a friend, that I can trust him, that I can rest in him; and that, even if there are head-winds and storms, or if we are off the course that I think the ship ought to be sailing in, still there is a Power and Wisdom that knows more about it than I do, and that is the Master of every wind and storm that ever blew. It is a great comfort to me to know, to trust, as the poet says, that,

"If my bark sink, 'tis to another sea."

It is a great comfort to me, again, to know that there is somebody in the universe who understands better what my life means, and what its purposes should be, than I do; that there is One who has in his hand all the great causes, and that I cannot possibly fail; that disaster cannot overtake me, if only I link my failure or my success with these eternal causes of God. I wish to read you, from the poet Arthur Hugh Clough, six lines expressing this faith, that seem to have more of the spirit of prayer and communion in them than volumes of so-called prayers and works of devotion:—

"It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so;
That howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, thou dost not fall."

This is confidence that all the great interests of the world are in the hands of an Infinite Power, an Infinite Wisdom, and an Infinite Love; and that, whatever becomes of my petty skirmish or battle, whether I am defeated or win, so long as I link myself with God, I must come in one of the victors at the end.

How shall I pray? Shall I measure my words, lest I say something that I cannot logically defend? Is it not wiser simply to put ourselves in the attitude of childhood towards fatherhood? I come into the presence of my Father; and it is a relief to pour out my whole heart to him. I know he understands, no matter how poor the utterance. I pour it out, not because he needs it, but because I need the relief of throwing off my burden and finding a place of rest. Suppose I do ask for something not wise: I not only know, but am glad to know, that he will refuse me. Suppose I do ask for something contrary to his natural laws: I am only pouring out the wishes and hopes and fears and emotions of my soul. I do not expect him to change his natural laws. If I did, if I thought I could interfere, I would never open my lips until my dying day: I would not dare to pray. It is only this confidence that I cannot that makes me free to tell him all I think and wish and hope and fear.

Then it is such a consolation and peace to me to know that there is one in the universe who understands me, one who never misconceives my purposes; one who knows all my weaknesses, every folly and foible in my nature; who understands that I am dust, but who loves me in spite of it, just as I love an imperfect child; one to whom I need not make any explanation, to whom I can just open my heart and soul, and rest, knowing that he comprehends it all.

Is there nothing of practical strength, of practical help and power in prayer and communion like this? It seems to me that here is all power, all rest, all peace.

I will end with those grand words which close the fortieth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. You will see that they sum up in their magnificent imagery the practical realization of rest, strength, and help that we may gain by simple personal communion with God: —

"Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

THE CHURCH.

WHATEVER may be our theories concerning its origin, its nature, its effects, either for good or for evil, there can be no question in the mind of the careful student of human history that religion has been the mightiest force that has ever moved the world. There is no such passion, no such enthusiasm, no such enduring earnestness, on any other namable theme, as there has been in all the ages gathered round this one question of religious thought and life. Religion has been mightier than kings; for it has set kings on their thrones, placed crowns upon their brows, and then, in spite of their prestige, in spite of their arms, in spite even of that "divinity that doth hedge a king," religion has been mighty enough to pluck those crowns from their foreheads, cast them into the dust, and overthrow their thrones. Religion has been mightier than race hatred; for it has bound together peoples naturally antagonistic on every other ground. It has been mightier than the potency of blood and common interests that tend to bind people together; for it has rent kingdoms asunder, and created civil strifes bitterer than those that can trace their origin to any other source. Religion has been mightier than the love that binds husband to wife; for it has forbidden the bans at the altar, and torn apart those who had plighted their mutual troth. Religion has been even deeper in its reach, higher, stronger than the mightiest mother love: for it has put bitterness

between mother and son; it has led the mother to offer to some divinity the child torn from her own bosom; it has made mothers willing coolly to contemplate the possibility of sitting in heaven and seeing their dearest, if it be God's will, consumed in everlasting flames. Religion, then, has been, in whatever direction you choose to study it, the mightiest force in all the world. Is it not natural, then, that this universal, world-wide, age-long enthusiasm should have organized itself, and have made itself mighty through this organization? Any passion, any power, that grasps us with a firm hold, and that grasps the thought and the interest and the feeling of large numbers of people at the same time, naturally crystallizes into organization. And so the Church is just as inevitable as a society for the advancement of science, as an art association, as government, as education, as any other of the great common interests of the world.

I need not spend time, this morning, in going back of the one great religious organization which preceded our modern Protestantism in Christendom. You are aware, if you have studied it at all, that Jesus wrote nothing, organized nothing. There was, at the time when he was born, a great seething conjunction of interests,— political, social, religious,— such as the world had never seen. Asia, Europe, east and west, the whole world, so far as it was even partially civilized or had any intercourse or any common interests, was in a condition of unrest. The old had become antiquated, recognized as such, and was losing its hold on the thought and enthusiasm of men, and was passing away. There was universal expectation of some new birth,— political, social, religious,— something that should touch the peoples and take the place of that which was crumbling away and ceasing to hold this power over the imagination, thought, and affection of men.

What did Jesus do to help on that which came to be after his death? As I have said, he wrote nothing, he systematized nothing, he organized nothing. Sometimes a chemist, in preparing the ingredients of that which is to be a crystal, puts this and that thing in solution; but these different elements lack the one thing which possesses the power to precipitate the whole mass, and set at active work those forces which are to obey the mysterious law that is to result in this wondrous work of crystallization. When that one thing is dropped in the result is inevitable. So it seems to me that the life and teaching and spirit of Jesus wrought upon these great, world-wide elements; and, as the natural result of what he was, what he said, what he did, there came to pass an organization which probably Jesus himself did not anticipate, perhaps never dreamed of. It seems to me very plain to one who carefully studies the gospels of the New Testament that Jesus had no idea of any such human future as that which history has unrolled from his day to our own. He expected a miraculous eruption of divine force from the clouds to supersede the natural order, and set up a kingdom of God here on earth or somewhere in the heavens. Jesus, then, is not responsible directly for this great organization which came to be called the Catholic Church. But, when we study that Catholic Church, if we compare it with any other religious movement of men, we are simply amazed at its scope, its range, its universal power, its magnificence. It seems to me the most marvellous achievement of man, simply for the grandeur of its organization, for the power with which it has played on the hopes, the fears, the imaginations, the reverence, the thoughts of men. It has, as no other organization has ever succeeded in doing, found a place to work for every man and every woman, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, high or low. This

must have been so, since it believed itself divine, inspired to make itself an organized world. Nothing less than this did it anticipate, nothing less than this did it strive to become.

I wish to note a few of the things for which the Church claimed to stand in those days of its glory; and then I wish to note some few changes that have passed over human thought, and recognize where we are, what attitude we hold towards it, and see if there is still place for the Church in the world, so that it appeals to you,— to liberal, enfranchised, earnest, business men.

The Church believed originally, and it was quite natural under the circumstances that it should, that it had authority to utter the very voice of God. It was God through his recognized agency permanently abiding here on earth, speaking to, leading, commanding, guiding, mankind. The Church believed that it possessed certain supernatural sources of knowledge, that it held the secrets of God in its keeping. It knew when the worlds were formed and how they were created. It knew the origin and the end of man. It knew God's purpose in humanity. It knew the secrets of the Divine, and what he meant in all this maze of human affairs. It knew what was to be the outcome. It claimed, at least, to have some secret exclusive means through which it listened and heard whispered the very counsels of the Infinite. At that time, this Church touched men, women, and children in their most vital interests,— touched them in every phase of their lives. The baby, as soon as born, was received into the hands of the priest for his consecration; and all the way through till the priest touched his forehead with the divine chrism of extreme unction, and dismissed the soul Godward, the Church held this life in its hands. Every business interest, all agriculture, art, science, no matter what, the Church touched, shaped, held, guided all. From morn-

ing till night, sleeping or waking, until this temporary sleep ended in the last sleep of death, the Church, blessing or banning, guiding or hindering, lifting up or casting down, touched every human soul.

Again, all the forms of human thought were under the exclusive control of the Church. Science studied only as the minister of the Church, dared only to utter what the Church permitted, dared to see only through the atmosphere of the Church, dared to construct only such a universe as the Church had authoritatively declared to be the ideal of that which was the work of the Almighty. Art wrought only for the Church. The first great pictures were painted by monks in their cloisters. They went to the work of the brush with the same devout spirit, the same tender reverence, the same exclusive devotion, with which they went to their vespers and their matins or with which they ministered by the bedside of the sick or dying. Art was only a form of ecclesiastical consecration. Imagination dared not fly off on ventures or pathways of her own. Only within the regions of church life and church tradition could it take its flight. Those things only were pictured which could kindle the devout aspirations and fire the heart to worship. Music, too, was no independent art or science. It, again, was only a servant of the Church. The songs that it heard and wrote down for the use of the choristers of the time were only songs of worship, echoes of that kind of praise which with their spiritual ear they heard sung round the throne of the Most High. Literature, too,—such literature as there was,—was only a servant of the Church. The nearest approach to the novel was the telling of the stories of ecclesiastical tradition, the legends of the saints. The nearest approach to the drama was the miracle play, which set forth some Scripture story in such fashion as to impress the rude and

ignorant imagination of the populace of the time. So every department of human thought and life was then under the control and dictation of the Church. The Church held them all in her hand, made them serve her one world-wide and eternal aim.

The Church, at this time, stood in some rude but grand and real fashion for the democratic ideal, for the rights of man as man. This is something that, in summing up the record of the Church, we ought to take account of and give her credit for, no matter what her attitude may be to-day. The Church, throughout the Middle Ages, in some real noble fashion, did stand for manhood. The cardinal's cap might be worn by the butcher's son, the pope's tiara might crown the brow of the common peasant, and these men were mightier than nobles, and he who wielded the papal power could be served by the loftiest and most magnificent kings, without the king's feeling the slightest sense of humiliation; for here was God present, incarnated almost for the time, in this humanity, no matter what its origin. Here, by God's authority, was one lifted up to power; and the distinctions of high and low vanish, as the little hills and valleys are as nothing to one who surveys them from the lofty peak of some high mountain. Here was the voice of authority that spoke for that which was essential in man and woman, without any regard to social or political distinctions of high or low.

The Church had her sacraments that possessed the miraculous power of conferring the gift of eternal life on those who, by means of these sacraments, became a part of this body of Christ on earth. It was by the sacraments that men and women and children came to link themselves vitally with this common life of the Divine; and the Church's priests had power to bind or loose, not only on earth, but

in heaven as well. This Church, at least, had the authority, as all men believed then, in the case of any individual, be he peasant or king, to say whether, when his poor soul, divested of its mortal raiment,— the conditions which made it high or low,— stood alone at the gate of the eternal city, and knocked for entrance,— this Church, I repeat, had the power to say whether that gate should be opened or shut. Do you wonder at the influence of a religion organized like this and ruling human life by such a sway? Not one human interest, not one human imagination, not one human passion, human hope, human fear, that the Church did not play on, as an organist touches his familiar keys.

But a great change has come over the world since the Church reigned in unquestioned supremacy over all the interests of human life; and there are many who fancy that that change means not only a diminution of the power, a disallowing of the claims of the Church, but its gradual extinction, its dying out, its passing away from among men.

I wish to note some few of these changes, and see if we can find what their significance really is, and so determine what our attitude to-day ought to be concerning religion in its organized form as a Church.

We no longer believe that the Church — any church — has any exclusive authority to speak the ultimate word for God on any subject in heaven or on earth. We no longer believe that the Church has any special, peculiar, exclusive information on any namable subject that is not open to intelligent and reverent men outside the Church. We do not believe that the temple has any private staircase by which its priests can climb into the presence of the All-wise, isten to the counsels of God, and repeat them to men. The Church no longer touches human life at so many points as it once did. Intelligent men and women do not think that the prosperity

of the child in this world or its salvation in another depends necessarily upon any priest's touching its forehead with a drop of water. Men die with no priest at their bedside, and have no fear that God will treat them differently on that account. Science and literature and art and music are no longer provinces of the Church's kingdom. The Church has lost apparently, like a kingdom being dismembered, one province after another. Science asserts its right to exist for its own sake, and does not fail to do its own work after its own methods and to stand by them, whether the Church approves or disapproves. Art has a field of its own. It is no longer only religious art. No longer does it exist simply to illustrate the doctrines, traditions, beliefs, hopes, and fears of the Church. Music has established a kingdom of its own, governed by its own laws, regulated by its own ideals, and is no longer dependent upon ecclesiastical favor or disfavor. Literature has multiplied itself almost to infinity; but, if it uses the church doctrines, or if a priest or a minister is represented as a character in a novel, or if the Church's ideas are introduced, these are simply incidental. What literature regards as its true mission is to represent human life.

We no longer believe that any priesthood has power to bless or ban the soul, to open or shut the gates of destiny. All these ideas have passed away from among intelligent and free men. Almost every single one of these special claims of the Church is now disallowed. Men stand up free from their domination.

We might think that this is what the pope of Rome declares it to be, decay, degeneracy, a falling away from God, were it not for the fact that humanity in all directions is better to-day than it was in those so-called ages of faith.

The average health and longevity of men and women have increased. Men and women are more intelligent. There is

less of cruelty, less of hate, less of crime, less of vice, less of depravity, less of poverty, less of general degradation in spite of these changes that have come over the Church. The world has been swinging out of the shadow into the sunlight; and life is better, fairer, sweeter, nobler to-day than ever in any age of the past.

We are compelled, then, to think that this is not degeneracy, not decay, that has been going on. We are not farther away from the love of God than were those cloistered saints of the olden time. But what is the significance of these changes? Are we become secularized? Are we losing the thought of the presence and the life of God out of the world? Is the time coming when we shall be all secular, when there will be nothing sacred left,— no more reverence, no more worship, no more of the ideal, no more love of these highest things? Shall the spirit have its wings clipped, and be harnessed into the every-day service of man's common needs on the common highways of life? Is this the tendency? I think not. Rather do I believe that the Church, organized religion, is to maintain its supremacy still in the highest regions of human thought and life, and that all these things which have seemed to be taken away from the province of religion are to be recognized again under another name, as being no less in the service of God, of the highest in human life, than they were in the olden time.

What does the Church stand for to-day? In the first place, we may be quite sure that it is not dying out of the world, and that it does not die out of the interest of the most intelligent men. Mr. Huxley to-day, for example, is as intensely, profoundly, interested in any vital religious question as is the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope of Rome; and those who stand for the highest reaches of human intellect are telling us every day that not only does

religion show no signs of dying, but that, in the very nature of things, it is one of the immortals.

Religion, then, will remain; and since religion remains, and since all men and women who think and care for their kind must be interested in it, all the natural reasons for religious organizations, for the Church, will remain unweakened, as I believe, in their power. We are passing through a time of transition and confusion; but we shall come back to our loyalty,— not only to religion, but to a wider, deeper, loftier, more intelligent loyalty than the world has ever known.

Let me indicate to you as briefly as I can some few of the things for which the Church stands to-day, peculiarly, exclusively, as no other institution does. The Church — and, all the time when I am using this word "Church," I mean the Church of the living God of to-day, not the church in any particular town or State, or any special organization, but those people who are in vital sympathy with the real life of God,— the Church, I say, stands for God's truth just as much as it ever claimed to in the past,— not for the exclusive possession of it, not for the idea that it has it all, but for a reverent, loving, open-eyed search for truth. It stands as God's authority on earth, listening for his latest whisper, and regarding it as its first, highest duty to speak that truth of God fearlessly to all mankind. Whatever else a minister may be, his first, last, and great duty is to listen, to seek to find God's truth, and then speak it in the face of all the world. The great mission of God's minister is that of a teacher, to teach people those truths that touch the question of how to live.

All truth is not equally important. It might be very interesting for us to find out the geography of the back side of the moon, which we have never seen; but, though that is

God's truth, though a thousand other things are God's truth, that which the Church and the Church's true minister must stand for, first, last, and all the time, is such truth of God as touches and shapes human living.

Then, in the next place, God's true Church stands for the ideal, for essential manhood and womanhood, as the one great thing in human life. We are apt to get confused, in the midst of our daily observation, by this interest or that. Many men live as though the one thing in all the world was for them to make a certain amount of money. Many other men live as though they cared simply to earn fame, as the writer of a book, a poem, a novel. Others live as though the great thing was to find out scientific truth,—facts in regard to the source, the conformation of the earth, the antiquity of the race. Another lives as though the one thing worth living for was to gain a political position; another, as though to attain a certain level in human society was the one thing worth human effort. But do not you see that all these things become as nothing when compared to the question whether a man is a man or a woman is a woman?

All these things are noble, if a man keeps mastery of them and makes them serve him. But he becomes petty, degraded, half man, no man, when these get the upper hand, and he is their slave. The best thing that this world has yet produced is a man. This world is a garden for the production of this one tree of human life,—to give it range, room, air, dew, sunshine, so that it may bloom into beauty and sweetness, and produce the fruits of noble character. All money, science, art, music, literature, political power, social position,—all these are simply these surrounding conditions of soil, dew, rain, sunshine, that give one opportunity to grow. And if he grows and becomes a man, no matter in what barren soil,

he has done the best he could; and, if he do not grow, no matter how much gardening there may be, the verdict, at least of God and of other men, will be: "Cut it down! It only cumbers the ground, and is in the way of some finer thing."

The Church then, I say, as no other institution does or can, stands for just this, ringing in the ears of all the world: You are men, and you are women, you are sons and daughters of God; and the one great thing in life is for you to be children of God, and all these other things are folly, if they do not help it on. The true Church does attempt to realize this organization of this kind of people. We ought to have here, within these walls, an attempt at any rate, a manly, intelligent attempt, to organize ourselves on the basis of our manhood and womanhood, without any regard to where we live before we come here. This is the ideal. This is the thing that the true Church ought to stand for in human life. Do you see the bearing, the range, of that? I have no time to enlarge upon it.

Then the Church stands — and I know of nothing else that does so stand — for worship, for the uplook and the outlook of life toward higher things than we have yet attained. All that this world has achieved of good has been through the fact that men have grasped at the intangible, elusive ideals of something higher than themselves, and which they have felt they must bow before in awe as being an outshining of the Divine. They have bowed and worshipped before it, and thus been transformed into its image. It is this which the Church is attempting to stand for,— the divine side of life realized in the hearts and lives of men and women.

Then the Church stands for trust. What a maze this life of ours is,— a maze that we trust has a plan in it, but that we cannot yet see clearly or unravel! We wonder what we are,

why we are so circumstanced, at the perplexities and difficulties that come to us. We come to pathways that lead this way and that; and we stop before them, and know not which to take. We are the followers of many a will-o'-the-wisp that leads us astray through bog and marsh. We sometimes feel it difficult to tell whether the shining through the gloom is from one of God's lights or the light that will lead us astray.

The Church in all ages has stood for the trust of the human heart in a guidance higher than we. It has stood for that faith which takes hold of God's hand, and says, "I know not the way, but he leads."

And then, at the very last, when we are on the borders of the shadow, the Church stands for the hope that whispers to us that, since we are the children of God, we are partakers of his eternal life; and that helps us to look death calmly in the face, see through the mask of fright and fear and superstition, and detect the loving eyes of God's angel underneath, so that we are ready to let him lead us out into that darkness which we believe shall be the light of the everlasting day.

The Church, then, still stands for all these things, the divinest and highest and noblest things in us,—for those that link us with God and with an eternal destiny. And the Church has a right, then, to use what? Any form of organization, any books, any services, any ceremonies, any instrumentalities, any science, art, literature, music,—anything that shall help, that is alive, that lifts us, that can assist in the attainment of her grand ideal dreams.

SALVATION.

In order that we may have the whole problem clearly before us, I propose, in rapid outline sketches, to set before you the scheme of the universe and the theory of salvation that springs out of it, which underlie the doctrines and the activities of the popular churches. I am aware that a large part of it is already familiar to you; but I need to present it in this clear outline way, in order that we may see precisely what we are dealing with, and may contrast it with some other theory that perhaps we shall be more likely to hold.

I shall not confine myself in this picture entirely to that which may be definitely derived from the Scriptures. Rather, I shall enlarge that picture, drawing some materials from poetry and tradition, in order that we may complete it as it lies in the popular mind. For it is undoubtedly true that there are certain elements of it which do not find absolute warrant in the Bible, though there may be hints that look that way, but which are derived from tradition and poetic handling of it by the great writers.

Not a great while ago, for example, Mr. Talmage said, speaking of the obligations of the great writers of the world to the Bible, that Milton owed his entire poem to the Scriptures. Yet you are aware that there are certain features of it that are not clearly set forth in the Old Testament or in the New. Still, it is undoubtedly true, as I said, that there

are hints here and there which need only to be expanded, carried out, finished, to give us the complete result of the scheme of things with which *Paradise Lost* dealt.

I wish, furthermore, to say, lest some one should choose to criticise me on this point, that all which I shall hereafter declare concerning the truth and the justice of this theory would hold equally true if I gave only so much of it as has distinct and definite warrant in the Bible, so that my enlarging the picture in this way will not necessarily weaken the force of the points that I wish to make.

To begin, then, at the beginning. In some indefinite period, before the world was created, there was war in heaven. Up to a certain time, it seems that even the angels had not clearly understood the real nature and rank of Christ. Milton tells us that on some particular occasion God declared to the assembled multitudes of the heavenly hosts that Jesus was his well-beloved and only-begotten son, and placed him at his right hand, as supreme over all the forces of the universe. This became the occasion of rebellion on the part of the ambitious Lucifer, who up to this time had regarded himself as the one next to the Supreme, equal to the highest. He was able to engage in this rebellion a one-third part of all the angels. After a long contest, he is at last cast out into the abyss; and hell is created as his future home, and the home of all his followers. So heaven is purged and is at peace once more. It is then determined in the councils of the Infinite that this earth shall be created, and made the abode of the new creature, man; and Jesus is commissioned, as the agent of the Supreme, to create the world, the sun, the stars, all this system of things we see.

Meantime, Satan has heard a rumor concerning this proposed creation of the world and man; and he consults with his followers, and determines to go forth and find the

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truth of it, and see if, in this other field, he cannot commence over again the warfare of his endless hate against the Supreme Power. He finds this earth sufficiently unguarded, so that he enters, discovers the Garden of Eden, sees Adam and Eve, watches his opportunity when Eve is alone,— thinking her to be the weaker of the two against whom to wage his contest,— and persuades her to disobey the word of her Creator and Lord. Thus he brings about the fall of man and the ruin of this creation so recently completed. The result of this disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve is supposed to be of such a nature that it can be entailed on all the children that are born to them. So that the whole world from that time on lies under the wrath of God for disobedience.

Now that we may understand clearly how this matter has lain in the minds of theologians of many centuries past, we need to form a conception of this world and its relation to God such as they entertained. Their idea was that this earth was only a sort of province in the universal kingdom of God, and that by an act of disobedience this certain set of God's subjects had rebelled against him. The earth, then, according to this theory, is only a province in God's kingdom; and of course, since all its inhabitants have committed high treason, they are outlawed, and have no more claim on the heavenly potentate. It rests entirely with him as to whether he will pardon any of them; it rests entirely with him as to the terms that he shall require as a condition of any pardon.

Now, right here, you need, in the light of this theory, to understand that much abused and much misunderstood doctrine of total depravity. It is not a pleasant doctrine in any light in which it can be viewed; but most liberals that I have talked with seem to me almost entirely to misconceive

it, and what the orthodox mean by it. But, if we are to oppose a certain theory, we ought at any rate to be fair and just enough to understand it before we begin our opposition. No orthodox man believes that the doctrine of total depravity teaches that anybody is as bad as he can be. That is not what they mean by total depravity at all. What do they mean? Precisely what I have just been outlining,— that every man, woman, and child on earth who has not accepted the terms of pardon that God has offered is in rebellion against God, outlawed, cut off from his mercy, and having no part in his love or care. Of course, it makes no difference what kind of a life this man lives,— whether he is good or bad, whether he is honest, whether he pays his debts, whether he is kind to his wife and loving towards his children, whether he is a good neighbor. That has nothing whatever to do with the question whether he is in rebellion against God. Therefore, you see that, in the light of this theory, Mr. Moody was perfectly justified in saying that morality had nothing whatever to do with salvation.

Consider, for a moment, a kingdom in rebellion. Suppose one of the provinces of England was in rebellion to-day against the central power. Suppose every man, woman, and child in it had committed some act that made them partners to this rebellion. So far as their relations to the queen were concerned, it would make no difference whether they were honest or dishonest, kind or unkind, wise or ignorant, good or bad. Sir Harry Vane was a noble man. I suppose it never entered into the head of the king to question whether he was honest, whether he was a good husband, kind to his children, all those things that make up a noble character. When Sir Thomas More was in the Tower, charged with high treason, it made no difference to the king what his private character may have been. He was guilty

of treason, he was under condemnation; and the king had the right to determine the conditions of pardon.

Now, according to this popular theory that we are considering, God has determined the conditions. He has looked upon this world lost and lying in misery, and has determined, with his consent, to send his only, well-beloved son to take upon him the condition of these rebels, to assume their flesh, to assume their guilt, to bear their punishment in their stead. If, then, we choose to accept this offer, this one only condition, we are freely pardoned. Do you not see, again, that it makes no difference as to whether I am a very good man or a very bad one, on this theory? If I have accepted these terms, I am pardoned, I am free from this condemnation. Henceforth, I am a subject of the kingdom of heaven. Until I do accept, I am a subject of Satan, the king of hell, and must look only to share his home and his fortunes.

And what is the Church on this theory? The Church is simply the militant band of those that make up the army of God, those that have accepted his pardon, those who make up one of the great fighting armies on earth. They have accepted the pardon, and become loyal to God once more. The rest are in rebellion, and it is the Church's business to proclaim these terms of pardon to the rebels, to get as many to join their ranks as possible; and the hope is that ultimately all the world will accept the terms, and be saved. The Church has always held and taught that those who accept the terms of pardon become God's subjects and share his home. Those who do not, no matter what their character may be, are still subjects of Satan and share his home. The theory is perfectly consistent, definite, clear, logical, provided you accept the premises,— provided this is our belief concerning the origin of things and the way the world is governed.

And now what shall we say about it? I wish to say, in the first place, that there is not one single particle of evidence producible on the face of the earth to prove that it is true. There is no more reason for accepting it than there is for accepting the Greek or the Roman mythology. There is no more reason for accepting it than there is for believing the theory of the universe taught by Buddha. There is no more reason for accepting it than there is for believing the stories concerning Hercules. There is not one particle of evidence for it anywhere.

Let us consider for a moment. There are certain things, certain facts, that we all accept, that would be eagerly offered as proof. The only trouble with these facts is that they are perfectly consistent with almost any other theory, and that they are not sufficient to establish the truth of this. Those who hold this theory tell us that Jesus came on purpose to work out his part in this grand scheme. He must have known about it if he did. He was the one, according to the theory, who created this world, who created Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, and placed them in it. And he it was who condemned them and turned them out of the garden after they had listened to the voice of the serpent. Jesus, they say, came down here on purpose to work out his part of this general plan; and yet, in all his recorded words, he never alludes to it anywhere. He never even mentions the names of Adam and Eve, or the Garden of Eden, or the Fall. He never says anything about his work of atonement; never anything about his being the second person in the Trinity; not one word about the whole scheme. A very strange silence!

Then, as we study the history of the Hebrews, we find that there is no hint of it in their earliest scriptures. We are to remember — and the larger part of the fogginess of

our religious conception springs out of the fact that we forget it — that the order in which the books of the Bible are printed is not the order of their composition. The writings of the great prophets are the oldest parts of the Bible. Genesis, and all the earlier books as they stand, were written, some of them, hundreds of years after the time of the first great prophets. These great prophets know nothing about any Adam or Eve, any Garden, any Fall. They say nothing about them. They know nothing of any Golden Age in the past. The only Golden Age of which they speak or seem to dream is the one that modern science dreams of, which it hopes to create in the future.

We find the Garden of Eden, Adam, Eve, the serpent, that whole mythical cycle of stories that gathers about the early condition of the world, only in connection with and after the Babylonish captivity. And it is as clear as daylight that they were borrowed from the Persians; for we find them all in Persia before the Jews went there, and we do not find them among the Jews till long after they had been there.

All this old scheme, then, is simply pagan tradition, with no warrant in the real, original religion of the Hebrews, with no warrant in the words of Christ, and only wrought out through the course of ages by dreaming theologians who never thought of such a thing as a critical investigation as to whether they were true or not. I assert, and challenge denial over all the world, that there is not one particle of rational, intelligent evidence on earth that any part of this story is true. On the other hand, we have abundant evidence that no part of it is true.

How, then, do so many people happen to believe it? It is easy to explain this, if you have studied human history and human nature carefully. How did it happen that the

whole populace of Athens believed in the Olympian deities? How did it happen that even Socrates, the wisest and noblest of them all, could so far countenance the popular religion as to ask his disciples to offer the customary sacrifice of two cocks to Æsculapius, only a little while before his death? How did it happen that these old world-wide traditions have become so inwrought into the very blood and fibre of people, that they are second nature to them? Or that so many foolish, frivolous superstitions are still cherished by intelligent people, who, if you challenged them, would tell you that they do not really believe them, yet the very next day would act as though they did? These things are inherited. They have become a part of our traditions. They enter into the fibre of our brain; and it takes ages, sometimes, to free ourselves.

Then, when you remember the kind of education that people receive, it is easy to understand this. The great majority of people in Boston to-day are not free to think and study. Popular pressure is brought to bear upon them. Two-thirds at least of the people in this country do not dare to be known as thinking for themselves, lest it should injure their business prosperity or their social standing. People have been taught that it is a sin to think, to be free, to question. They have been taught that this cringing acceptance of whatever the Church chose to offer them was a virtue. I have had occasion to tell you before that one of the most intelligent ladies that I have ever met in this city said to me frankly: "I would give the whole world if I dared to believe as you do; but how do I know but, after all the reasoning, there may be the kind of God in the universe that people tell me about? And, if there is, I am afraid of him."

Within two weeks, I have received one of the most pitiful

letters I ever read. It was from a young man in Brooklyn, twenty years of age, whose health is ruined, who has been obliged to give up his preparation for college, whose future is destroyed, simply by the haunting fear of hell. He begs me, if I can in any way, to help him out of it. And a friend who has talked with him in Brooklyn tells me that he already knows all the arguments, all the facts, that he is well educated, only he keeps saying to himself, "Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps it may be true after all; and I am afraid."

Again, arguments like this are heard. I meet them on every hand. I have a friend who is a liberal clergyman, whose mother is still devoutly a follower of the old faith; and she says to him: "My son, if your theories are correct, I am safe as well as you. If my theory is correct, I am safe, and you are lost." So this appeal to prudence, at any cost, is urged upon everybody. There are reasons enough why people do not dare to rise and look heaven in the face, and question the great facts of the universe and human life, to think for themselves, and live out the results of their convictions. The great mass of the people that we meet every day are not educated in this direction. It is no fault of theirs. They are busy about the things of this world. They must take their opinions from somebody; and they take counsel with prudence, and go with the majority.

If this theory of the universe were true, I, for one, should find no response in my heart; nor should I find that I could be grateful to God for his mercies. I know how impressive the picture is that can be drawn of Jesus sitting on the throne of universal dominion, the well-beloved Son of God, leaving his glory, coming down here, submitting to be born of a virgin, taking upon himself our condition and suffering, going about doing good, at last crucified, in order that he might save those that believe. When we look simply at

this picture of the supposed tender mercies and love of God, so great an impression can be made that I do not wonder whole audiences are bathed in tears.

But let us look back of this picture of mercies, and see what the whole scheme includes. Let me show you what I mean by an illustration. Within two years, you will remember there was an epidemic of cholera in the city of Naples, brought about, as everybody knows, by perfectly natural and preventable causes, but looked upon by the great mass of the church followers in Italy as a mysterious, divine visitation. King Humbert does at that time what very few kings would have dared to do. He goes to Naples, and passes through the infected part of the city. He pays out of his own private fortune uncounted sums for the good of his people. He gives money, time, and risks his very life, in showing his love for his subjects. There is probably no king in Europe who is more tenderly loved and reverenced than he, very largely on account of this display of his tender compassion and humane mercy. But suppose King Humbert had created the city of Naples; suppose he had created all its inhabitants; suppose he had planted the cholera there on purpose; suppose he had done it that he might have an opportunity to make a theatrical display of his tenderness and love; suppose he let a large part of the people — some thousands — die, and, to show what he could do, saved a few, to let people know how tenderly merciful and kind he could be; and suppose he did all this "for his own glory": would the people of Italy be especially grateful for his tenderness and care? Rather would they have reason to hunt him from his throne and kingdom, until his name were blotted out from among the monsters of the earth.

We must remember that it is a part of this theory that we

are considering that God created this world and sent it spinning through the blue; that he created all its inhabitants and conditioned and circumstanced them just as they were, knowing they would fall; that he did it all on purpose; that he let the devil, in the guise of a serpent, whisper his alluring words; that he did not protect his innocent creatures against temptation. He is responsible, on that theory, for the fall in the first place, and for the eternal hell which is its result.

In the light of that, if this picture be true, the descent of Jesus, and the cross, instead of calling for gratitude, should lead every man, woman, and child on earth to fling universal and eternal defiance in the face of heaven, even at the cost of eternal hell. There has not been on earth, in all human history, a monster comparable to the character of God on any such theory as this,—not one. Nero? He was mercy incarnate in comparison; for what did he do? According to the story, he simply clothed a few Christians in garments of pitch and tar, and set them on fire to light his garden at night. A few hours of suffering, and they were at peace. But God, according to this theory, has uncounted myriads in flames that will never be quenched.

Take the same theory in regard to the terrible accident that has just happened. If the president of the road, or his son, or his immediate friends, should have gone there, spent their private fortunes, risked their lives, to help the sufferers after they had plunged from the bridge, we should have exclaimed at their tenderness and mercy. But if they had arranged the road, placed the broken rail, putting it there on purpose that the train might go over, and then helped to save a few, what then would you say?

Another consideration. The universal belief of this theory which I have outlined can be looked on as nothing other

than a universal calamity. Why? For the simple reason that, since it is not true, and since a great majority of people believe that it is true, it diverts the universal thought of Christendom from the real state of affairs, from the real needs, sufferings, and dangers of the world, and turns the attention away from any adequate study of the facts, that might lead to an adequate remedy. Only consider, thousands and thousands of men giving their hours and days, all their time, their best thought, their best enthusiasm, their money, all their endeavor, to work on a theory which is not true, and which, consequently, cannot lead to the desired result of lifting up and saving the world from the evils that are crushing out its life.

Here is a precisely parallel thing. A few years ago there was an epidemic of small-pox in Canada. The Church organized processions, marched through the infected districts, and offered its prayers to God for relief. We all know that the processions and the prayers accomplished nothing, unless, possibly, the processions had a good deal to do with spreading the infection. Do you not see what a waste of time and effort was here? Suppose all the people in the city of Montreal had understood the causes of the epidemic, and had set about removing those causes by rational and intelligent means. Do you not see the evil that results if, in the presence of any great calamity or suffering, the attention is turned to false causes and remedies? It takes away time, strength, money, means, from that which might be looked to as able to accomplish the desired results.

And so this confining of the attention of the civilized world to a scheme of human history and human salvation which is baseless as a dream of the night takes away enthusiasm, money, time, effort, from the adequate study of the real evils under which the world is suffering, and from an

attempt to remove those evils. One who studies human history with an unbiassed mind can come to only one conclusion: that the Church, dreaming forever of this theory of things, has used its utmost endeavor to thwart, hinder, oppose, the rest of the world in trying to find out the real state of affairs. Astronomy, chemistry, political economy, medicine, the care of poverty, anæsthetics for the alleviation of human suffering,— every one of these has been opposed from first to last by the organized Orthodoxy of the age. And then, as in the case of slavery, in spite of all it has done against them, after the grand result has been achieved, it has turned round and claimed the result as its own. The churches to-day are beginning to claim the abolition of slavery as entirely their work; but everybody who has studied the history of the time knows that in that early day there was hardly a minister in Boston who dared to say a word, except a few of the heretics,— hardly one among all the orthodox of the time.

Now, then, what are we to think? What is the theory of human history that we are to hold? I believe that we have a theory of things which is no guess-work, that is not traditional, but a theory wrought out on the solid basis of scientific investigation, and which future study will develop and demonstrate more and more clearly. We can trace the beginning of life on this planet. We can trace the development of one form from another, until at last appears man, man barbaric, brutal, on the borders of the animal world; ignorant, full of bestial passions, but with that in him which has developed a Shakspere, a Jesus. The truth about human history is to be found in the study of the process of the climbing of the race out of its barbaric conditions up to the heights of civilization. There has been no fall; there is no wrath, only as a figure of speech. There is only that

terrible, inexorable fact of the changelessness of God's laws, which are the very conditions of our life. If we transgress at any point, purposely or ignorantly, the necessary suffering will follow. We speak of the thunder-cloud as angry, and so we may speak by poetic license of God as angry; but there is no wrath: there is only the eternal wisdom and the eternal unchangeableness above and beneath and around us. There has been no rebellion on earth. We are not condemned rebels. We do not need pardon in the old sense. We do not need any salvation in the old sense. These words should either have new conceptions put into them, or else should be disused and thrown aside like worn-out coins. We are simply a race begun on the borders of brutality and ignorance, but learning how to live,— that is all. We are here at school. The only thing for us to do is to find out the truth about this universe, about ourselves, about the conditions of helpful living, with the feeling that God is not angry with us, but that he wants to help us, that he is trying to help us, that he is leading us by his wisdom, and that he is all the help and guidance that we need. Under his guidance and direction, we have made all the progress that we have made; and all that we need to do is to study more carefully the laws of life and obey them, in order ever to ascend to higher and better conditions.

We need to know another thing, that the world has only half understood, that the old religion has mystified us about for ages: that the happiness and the peace and the joy of this world come from obedience to God; that happiness does not mean disobedience, doing just what one pleases, only with something to be afraid of by and by. That has been the church theory; but it is false from bottom to top. The only happiness, the only peace, the only joy, the only prosperity, is in knowing and obeying the laws of God, which

are the laws of life and growth. No man ever yet prospered in opposition to those laws. We read in the Old Testament what the psalmist said: "I have seen the wicked flourish, spreading himself like the branches of a green bay tree." He never saw anything of the sort, and no man ever saw it. There has never been a case on this earth of the prosperity of a wicked man,— never. A wicked man gets rich, a wicked man gets to be president or king, a wicked man may have his own way and become powerful; but, in so far as those things are concerned which any sane or sensible man calls manly, those things die in the process of that kind of getting rich, or that kind of becoming king, in that kind of prosperity. Goodness, truth, love, tenderness, all those things that make men and women what they ought to be, which make them children of God, helpers of their fellow-men, which lead to peace and happiness,— these things cannot grow in the atmosphere of anything but knowledge of and obedience to the laws of God. Whatever power a man may have, whatever position he may occupy, so far as these other things are concerned, if he breaks the law of the development of his inner life and character, then these things die.

We need to learn one other thing,— that I believe to be the profoundest truth of human life,— that we are spiritual beings, children of the Infinite Spirit; that there is possibility of a personal relationship with that Infinite Spirit. We need to learn to love its infinite loveliness, to admire its infinite beauty, to respect and obey its infinite right. We need to get on terms of personal association and intimacy with this heavenly Father of ours. The truest, freest life is not a life of calculation as to results of thoughts and words and deeds. The little boy who is in a healthful condition of love for father and mother does not stop on the street to

calculate how many lashes it will cost him to do this thing, how much pleasure he will have if he does another. The rule of his life is the remembrance of his mother's love and what she would like to have him do; and, if he is a noble, manly fellow, this becomes instinct with him, and he does right because he has learned from her eyes that this is not only the noblest, but the happiest thing to do.

We need to learn this personal relationship with our Father in heaven, until we become convinced that, on the whole and in the long run, obedience to this eternal righteousness and love means happiness and peace and joy; and that disobedience to it means, no matter what it promises, in its ultimate outcome, the opposite. We need to have this become instinct with us, so that we shall not stop to reason.

We need the comfort that ought to come, and that shall come, to us by the trust that this Infinite Spirit controls and governs human affairs, and that, whether our cause seem to meet with defeat or glorious victory to-day, there can be but one outcome at the end, and that — victory for that which is eternal truth, eternal beauty, and eternal love; because the eternal truth and the eternal beauty and the eternal love are God, and he holds, directs, and guides all things.

The Debt of Religion to Science.

BETWEEN a knowledge of the laws of God (which is science) and a reverent and loving obedience to the laws of God (which is religion), it seems simply and only absurd to suppose the possibility of any conflict. Yes, to us, who have outgrown that state of mind to which such an antagonism seemed not only natural, but inevitable, it does seem very absurd. But, of course, it has not seemed absurd to those who believed it in the past; it does not seem absurd to those who still believe it to-day. To them, on the other hand, the very title of this chapter would be an absurdity. Religion indebted to Science? Rather would they hold it true that Science is the modern antichrist, "that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" (II. Thess. ii., 4). Science, they say, is the enemy of revelation; it opposes knowledge to faith; it encourages doubt in the presence of divine mysteries; it impeaches the accuracy of the Bible; it denies the fall of man; it refuses credit to the miraculous; it questions the use of prayer; it casts a mist of uncertainty over the future destiny of man; it puts force and law on the throne of the universe, and declares that God is an unneeded hypothesis. It discredits the whole scheme of salvation, and leaves man "without God and without hope in the world."

Such is the way in which science is looked upon by the rigorous and consistent champions of the old faith. And among thousands, who do not openly oppose or impugn the methods and results of modern knowledge, there is an uneasy feeling that its tendencies are dangerous to religion; and they wonder if the battle now raging be not the real Armageddon, long ago foretold, in which is to be fought out the final great conflict between God and his enemies. It is not at all inconsistent with this state of mind that these men should declare, as did Mr. Talmage in a recent lecture, "There is no contest between genuine science and revelation." For, with these, "genuine science" is only such science as does not conflict with their view of revelation. In this way, any most bitter opponents can be brought into the most loving harmony.

But, instead of ridiculing or denouncing the opposition to science of these old instituted religions, it is more important that we understand it. After recognizing the facts, if we can find out how such states of mind came to be facts, we shall then be ourselves fitted to do something towards bringing about a better comprehension of the real relation in which science stands to religion.

At the outset, then, we note the fact that most of the leading scholars and scientific men of the world do not believe in the historic creeds of the popular Church. Now and then there is an exception in the case of a scholar whose studies do not lead him on to controverted ground; or there is a scientific man, like Faraday, who, as if he were handling explosive gases, avowedly keeps his science and his religion carefully apart from each other. But the general statement is true. And the religious leaders naturally infer that, in scientific studies that lead to such results, there must be something essentially hostile to religion. The general antag-

onism seems proved, then, by patent facts; and, when we come to look beneath the surface, we find the undercurrents of spirit and method to be sweeping in different directions. Free thought, investigation, doubt, and the demand for proof, — these are of the very soul of science. But the official exponents of religion teach that the first step towards God is a childlike spirit of belief, the unquestioning acceptance of what is unhesitatingly taught. The New Testament declares that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And Thomas, who did nothing worse than ask proof in support of the claim that a stupendous miracle had been wrought, is held up to peculiar reprobation. To-day, we should reprobate the man who was so credulous as to do anything else. It is, indeed, admitted that the dogmas of religion appear to be incompatible with reason. Therefore, reason is denounced; and faith is taught as a superior faculty, that is able to grasp facts that are above reason. Reason and faith, therefore, are often regarded as polar opposites. Not long ago, a leading ecclesiastic of Boston said to me: "It is either reason or faith. Were it not for my faith in the Church, I should be where you are." And this peculiar "faith" no one claims to be able to substantiate by the scientific method. Popular religion decries "the wisdom of this world"; and the Prayer Book asks us to renounce "the world and the flesh," as well as "the devil." And, in common religious phraseology, there is a "God of this world," who is supposed to be the great opponent of the God of religion. But this world is the sacred text-book of all scientific study.

Such, then, being the general mutual attitudes of science and instituted religion, it is not strange that the majority of preachers regard the tendencies of modern thought with suspicion. It is not strange that a minister should privately

tell a friend that he did not allow himself to read any book that threatened to disturb his belief. I remember that, when I was first beginning to be looked upon as a heretic, one of the principal charges against me was that I had so many scientific books in my library. Out of such study no good could be expected. It is perfectly natural that the late pope, Pius IX., should turn the artillery of the Vatican against modern knowledge. It is perfectly natural that the drift of all modern literature, and that the influence of the common schools, should be looked upon with alarm. It is perfectly natural that professors in theological seminaries should be driven from their chairs for teaching evolution.

These are not peculiarly modern facts. Neither are they accidental. The long warfare of the Church against free thought and natural knowledge is familiar to you all. To detail it would be to review church history for the last eighteen hundred years. And this, as I have said, is no accident. The spirit of investigation and proof seems to have been as utterly foreign to the mind and method of Jesus as to any of his followers. Indeed, there is no trace of it in the Bible anywhere. Throughout the Old Testament, it is the seer and the oracle that are looked to as the sources of all knowledge. Indeed, this age-long antagonism appears at the very beginning; for the primal sin, followed by the primal curse, was tasting the fruit of "the tree of knowledge." The Elohim seem to have been jealous lest "the man become as one of us." In almost all the great religions, the gods are easily offended, easily made jealous of man. They look with suspicion upon his attempts to become wise or to better his physical condition. Utter humility and prostration, poverty and self-depreciation, have always pleased them better. What else but this is the lesson of the Prometheus myth? Jove is angry because the old Titan has

shown pity towards the abject condition of the despised human race. In most of the great religions, the supreme gods have shown themselves friendly towards men, if at all, only through some mediator or intercessor. For some reason or other there is almost always enmity. The search for knowledge and the attempt to produce a higher worldly civilization are treated as impiety.

Now, for a fact so wide-spread as this we have been considering, there must exist some equally general cause. And this cause, it seems to me, is not very far to seek. It would take me too long to trace the processes by which it has come about; but, in perfectly natural ways, it has come to pass that God has been set over against matter as its eternal opposite. It is spirit *and* matter, God *and* nature; and the two are in everlasting contrast. The root of the opposition is in the philosophy which underlies our conceptions of both religion and science. The leaven of Manichæism still works in the modern world. We escaped the outright dualism of the Avestan faith. Young Christianity was wise enough to reject the extremest folly of the Gnostics, who held to an almost impassable gulf between God and the world, even denying that the pure, supreme Spirit could have condescended to create it at all. But, practically, the dominant Christian philosophy has come to substantially the same thing. God's kingdom has not been treated as the natural product, the consummate flower, of this world's growth in civilization. Rather is it true that this world has been regarded as alien from God, an opposing kingdom, in revolt against him, separated from his divine life, and tending evermore to deeper degradation. The Christian in this world is in an enemy's country: he must fight all natural tendencies, and hold himself aloof from all worldly entanglements. In this way, he may one day escape from the prison-house of

the flesh, and be received into God's eternal kingdom of spirit. God, then, is outside the world and opposed to it. His elect ones are chosen out of it; and, when the process of their training, through temptation and sorrow, is completed, he will burn it up. Then his kingdom of spirit will be forever separated from all those who have been the children of this rebellious world.

With a dominant philosophy like this, it could not be otherwise than that religion should find an apparent enemy in science. Knowledge of a ruined, fallen, accursed world, a world at enmity with God, could not do other than lead its devotees away from God. And, when this knowledge began to teach doctrines opposed to what was firmly held to be a supernatural and divine revelation, this only served to confirm the opinion that it was the enemy of God. Worldly wisdom could not be expected to discover revealed truths, and it was not competent to judge them. It was treated, therefore, only as a self-willed refusal of rebellious natures to bow to righteous and just authority.

But the devotees of science have kept on their humble, common-sense way, until they have accumulated so vast a body of verifiable natural knowledge that it can no longer be disregarded. It has changed the face of the earth, and lifted the level of human life. However it may have damaged man's prospects for the next world, it has unspeakably benefited this one. And, at the same time, its results in the realm of thought have been such that the old religious beliefs are fast fading from the minds of intelligent men. So a problem faces us. What does the attitude of the modern world mean? Is God being beaten in his attempt to govern the world? Or is it not more probable that his self-constituted interpreters have mistaken the relation in which he stands to it? Is it not just possible that God is

in the world, not outside of it? and that he is leading it forward, not fighting against its progress? This seems to be, at any rate, the growing conviction of the grown-up humanity of the nineteenth century. And, at least, it may be worth looking at before rejecting it in the interest of the childish fancies of the world's ignorant and inexperienced childhood. Let us, then, look a little at this matter of science, and see what it is.

Since Science won her first and most dramatic triumphs on the fields of physical research,—such as astronomy, geology, and chemistry,—there is a feeling in the popular mind that the physical is her peculiar and only proper sphere. And certain other claimed methods of knowledge appear to be very jealous lest she should get out of this sphere. But she has already asserted her right of eminent domain in biology, in anthropology, in sociology; and she already promises to bring order out of confusion in ethics, and is beginning with her methods to explore the mysteries of religion. And her claim is nothing less than "Everything or nothing." Meantime, the other so-called methods claim to be able to put us in possession of certain most important kinds of knowledge to which the plodding feet of Science can never lead. They have turnpikes, cross-cuts, "royal roads"; they soar on quick wings, while Science, like a grub, only burrows in the earth. So they tell us.

Let us look, then, a little at these other methods, and see if their claims are good. Faith is one of these. But what is faith? As very commonly used it is only credulity. Faith can have nothing to do with questions of history, as to whether such or such a thing really happened at some time in the past. That is a question of evidence. Neither can faith rightly concern itself with the truth or falsity of certain dogmas that offer themselves for belief. All true

faith must base itself on and spring out of human experience. In the light of the past, and following the trend of what has been, it reaches forward beyond the visible, and grasps as real that which is not yet seen. It finds its reason and justification, as we shall soon see, only in science. Supernatural revelation, again, claims to be another source of knowledge. But, were there any such thing, it would have — before it could be cognizable by man — to come within the range of and submit to be judged by human experience. It falls definitely within the scope, then, of the scientific method. No matter what its source or nature, it can reach and touch man only as it becomes a fact in his experience; and, as such, it must be dealt with. So far as it transcends experience, it is outside of and beyond our range, and so far unknown; and, if we are to accept its credentials, they must be submitted to us for examination and verification. Supernatural revelation itself, then, must submit itself to the scientific method before it can be of any use to us. Another supposed source of knowledge is intuition, the quality or gift of the seer, the direct insight of supersensible truth. But, so far as intuition is real, Science adopts and explains it, making easy room for it as one form of the first step in her own true and only method of knowledge.

As a concrete illustration of what I mean, let us take him who is regarded as the greatest seer of our modern world, — our Emerson. He says, "I see: the truth looks to me so and so." But he positively disclaims argument or proof. What, then, is this seeing of his? No matter that he uses the "mind's eye" instead of the physical organ of vision, his seeing is neither more nor less than observation, the first step in the scientific method. And no matter how true or grand his seeing, just because he does not take the other steps of the process of science, his seeing is wholly useless

to me, unless I also can see the same. Suppose I say, "I see a mast far off on the edge of the horizon at sea." But you are short-sighted, and do not see it. You have, then, only my bare word for it; and it is open to you to suppose it only a fancy on my part, or traceable to some defect in my own vision. So this kind of seership is grounded only on personal authority, and there is no way of making it certain to one who is inclined to doubt. This kind of wisdom is non-transferable. And, the minute you take steps to prove it, you do it, and must do it, by going on to complete the processes of the scientific method. So of philosophy: it is not an independent method or source of knowledge, and it is valid only as it uses scientifically ascertained truths as its subject-matter, and deals with them in accordance with the scientific method.

To make clear and to substantiate these points, let us turn to, and note carefully what we mean by, the scientific method. It consists of three steps or processes: 1. Observation; 2. Hypothesis; 3. Verification by fresh and repeated observation and experiment. If we take only the first step,— observation, or looking,— what we think we see may be only an illusion, a partial or erroneous impression, due to some carelessness on our part or to some personal defect. It is only when we have corrected and verified our impressions by repeated experiment that we can be reasonably sure of what we call knowledge; for most of our first impressions are more or less erroneous. The very first observation may be correct and complete; but on that basis alone we can never be sure of it.

The thing we claim to see by faith or intuition, the thing that philosophy or revelation claims to bring before us as real,— this thing may be real; but we can never thus be certain of it. We have no right to call it knowledge until

we have subjected it to renewed experiment, and have verified it. In this way, and in this way only, can we prove that it is not due to some subjective illusion or to some personal peculiarity or defect of observation.

And the distinction which is commonly set up between so-called physical knowledge, to which the scientific method is appropriate, and another so-called spiritual knowledge that transcends the scientific method, is wholly unreal and illusory. Whatever does not come within the range of man, whatever does not touch or modify human life in any way, is as if it were non-existent, and does not concern us one way or another. But whatever does come within our range, whatever does touch us, whatever modifies our lives in any way or to any degree, this,— whether it is physical or mental or spiritual,— by the very fact that it touches us and so concerns us, is proved to be within our reach. For, were it not within our reach, it would not touch or concern us. Since, therefore, it does touch us,— and is therefore shown to be within our reach,— we can observe it, test it, and verify it. No matter whether the observation be with the physical, the mental, or the spiritual eye, if it is reality, and we do really discern it, then this discerning is only another name for observation, the first step in the scientific method.

All reality then, all that touches and so concerns man,— whether on earth or in the heavens above or in the depths beneath, whether it be memories or records of the past or fears or hopes of the future,— all reality is within the scope of the scientific method; and whatever can be known about it can be known in this way, and only in this way. For until that which claims to be true is verified by fresh observation and experiment, while it may or may not be true, it is only belief or opinion: it cannot be knowledge.

Since, therefore, the scientific method is the only method of knowledge, Religion must adopt it and make it her own before she can make theology — what it some day will be — the science of sciences. In that day, Religion will be the queen of the world, and Science will be her prime minister.

It has been needful for us to take so much time in clearing up the misconceptions concerning science and its relation to religious knowledge. But since religion is the dominant reality of human life, and therefore cannot be harmed, but only helped, by the fullest light and knowledge, we shall find it true that Science has been helping religion all along. Her services are not all in the future: some of the grandest of them are in the past. While the mistrustful advocates of religion have been looking askance at science, and mistaking it for an enemy, this unrecognized knight, "with the strange device" on his shield, has entered the lists, and unhorsed a multitude of the foes of God and man. And, as his visor is lifted, we look upon the face of a champion whose countenance gleams with God's light, and whose arm wields the weapons of eternal truth, forged in the very workshops of the Almighty.

In justification of this position, I propose now to call your attention to some items of *the debt of Religion to Science.*

1. Science has revealed to us a universe fit to be the garment of an infinite God.

However crude their thought, men have always had some sort of notion of the world about them, of the gods or god residing in and controlling the heavens and the earth; they have had some notion of their own natures, and of the relation in which they stood to these external and superior powers. And their theology has always been their theory of these relations. All religions, then, root themselves in, spring out of, and are shaped by some cosmology, or theory

of things. And the religion can be no grander or more worthy than the cosmology. A grand religion, then, must be housed in a grand conception of the universe. For an Infinite God there must be an infinite home.

I need not describe in detail the childish conceptions which the childhood world entertained concerning its dwelling-place; for you are familiar with them. They were the natural fancies of barbaric people. A little flat world, with as many fancied centres as there were nations, with a limited heaven close by, the home of its peculiar gods: — it is only fanciful variations of the same general plan.

The heaven and earth of Hebrew tradition, which after ages consecrated as part of a supposed divine revelation, was shaped almost precisely after the pattern of a modern Saratoga trunk. The surface of the earth was its floor; and the sun, moon, and stars were attached to the underside of a concave dome, which would answer to the cover. Beyond it on all sides was the primeval chaos. Heaven, the home of God and his angels, was above the dome. The Church added to this conception a cavernous hell beneath, — a sort of false bottom for this trunk, — and thus completed the structure of the universe as it was popularly held, down even to mediæval times.

The Ptolemaic astronomers imagined all sorts of clumsy contrivances in their vain attempts to account for the movements of the heavenly bodies. Their sky dome was

> "With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,
> Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb."

But so unsatisfactory was the arrangement, after all, that the acutest human intellects came to regard it as altogether unworthy of a divine contriver. Prince Alphonso of Castile said that, had he been present at the creation, he could have suggested a much better plan.

Thus, Religion not only labored under the burden of such clumsy contrivances, but her official representatives fought bitterly, and for ages, against a nobler and more worthy conception. But, against all opposition, Science persisted; and, at last, the walls of space gave way, the solid dome became the boundless expanse of air, the earth was seen "dancing about the sun," and our solar system took its place as one in the ordered maze of countless galaxies of worlds.

At last, then, we have a universe-house large enough for a God, the outlines of a temple fit to be the seat of a worship to match the boundless aspirations of the human soul. And this, in every part, is the work of science. And science has achieved it, not only in spite of instituted and official religion, but for the sake of religion; that is, science has given to religion a temple, one "that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

2. But not only has science revealed to religion an infinite universe: it has established beyond question the fact that it is a universe. It is not a chaos, but an orderly unity.

With the old conception of the universe, it was easy enough to believe in two gods or a thousand. No system, no unity, was discovered; and the Titanic forces seemed to be in everlasting conflict. Light fought the darkness, summer contended with winter; while cloud, wind, lightning,—all appeared to be the gigantic play of separate or hostile powers. Religion gave in her adhesion to some one deity, but was never quite sure but that the object of her worship might be some day dethroned, as Jupiter dethroned Saturn, by some other supernal king.

But, when Newton demonstrated the law of gravitation, the universe, from dust grain to Sirius, was seen to be held in the grasp of one almighty power. Then came the proof that all the different forces of the universe were only dif-

ferent manifestations of one eternal force that never was less or more. And, at last, the spectroscope has revealed the wondrous fact that the dust beneath our feet is of the same material as that of which the glittering suns are made.

It is, indeed, true that Religion declared, ages ago, "The Lord our God is one Lord!" But, all the same, a hundred other religions had their "gods many and lords many"; and no one was able to do more than assert the nothingness of all but one. But, at last, science has demonstrated

"One law, one element,"

and has made it reasonable for us to complete the line, and make it read,—

"One *God*, one law, one element."

It is one force everywhere; and, if God be at all, he is now known to be only one. And this result of knowledge is the magnificent gift to religion of science. The glory belongs to science, and to science alone.

3. Not only is the infinite oneness demonstrated, but, as already hinted,—though I wish to set the point apart, and mark it off by itself,—an infinite order is also revealed; and so we find it rational to believe in an infinite wisdom.

Of course, it is but a small part of the universe that has been explored; and even that can be said to be but partially known. But every step so far taken reveals an intelligible order. And, since our judgments are based upon experience, and each new experience reaffirms and deepens the one impression, the conviction is a cumulative one. All the known, then, being orderly, we feel an unshaken confidence that whatever seems chaotic or unwise bears that appearance to us only because it is not better known.

Here, again, as in regard to the oneness, though the religious heart might trust and hope, it is only Science that has

bestowed upon Religion the power to demonstrate her magnificent faith.

4. And, once more, this order that science has revealed is not a fixed and finished order, so that we may not hope for anything better than that which is already seen. It is rather evolution, an orderly progress, the apparent on-reaching of a purpose; and so it becomes rational for us to cherish any grandest hope as being within the scope of possibility.

Against the old universe, as a fixed and finished piece of mechanism, wrought by the hand of a supernatural contriver, certain very grave and insuperable objections could be brought. It seems to me that, on that theory, the serious criticisms of John Stuart Mill, for example, cannot be met. The God of this universe,— regarding it as a finality,— Mr. Mill thinks, cannot be both perfectly good and perfectly powerful at the same time. Either he does not wish to make things better — and, in that case, is not completely benevolent — or else he cannot make them better; and so either his wisdom or his power is impeached.

But the fact of evolution, the establishment of which is unspeakably the grandest of all the achievements of science, completely flanks this whole class of objections, and so gives to Religion a firm basis for her noblest trust. Since all these things are in process, reaching forth toward some result as yet but dimly seen, it were as illogical to condemn them for present imperfections as it would be to judge the quality of an apple that ripens only in October by tasting its puckery bitterness in July. Such judgment is as unscientific as it is irreligious. We are, then, scientifically justified in singing one verse, at least, of the old hymn of Cowper: —

> "His purposes will ripen fast,
> Unfolding every hour:
> The bud may have a bitter taste,
> But sweet will be the flower."

And, though the old watch-maker type of design may be discredited, a broader, grander, farther-reaching teleology is revealed. Taking in the wider sweep of things; considering the growth of a system from star-dust to planet; noting the upward trend of life from protozoon to man, and, within the human range, from animal to soul; seeing how,

> "Striving to be man, the worm
> Mounts through all the spires of form,"—

in this larger survey, we are taking no unjustifiable liberty with the facts when we chant our trust in the words of Tennyson,—

> "Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs."

Within this generation then, for the first time in the history of the world, Religion is able to feel beneath the feet of her faith in "the eternal goodness" the firm ground of demonstration. And this is the gift of Science.

5. Still another gift of Science to Religion is nothing less than what is essentially a spiritualistic conception of the universe. There is a sort of grim irony in the fact that, while Religion has always been stigmatizing Science as materialistic, she herself has never been able to demonstrate the opposite of materialism, and has had to wait for Science to do it for her. For it is Science, at last, that has dealt materialism its death-blow, and made it reasonable for us to believe that the world is only the bright and changing garment of the living God. Religion has disbelieved and denounced materialism for ages; but, all the while, she has been haunted by it, as by a ghost which all her conjurations could not lay. But Science has now demonstrated its utter incompetence as a theory for the explanation of the universe. A theory is accepted as valid by as much as it can account for the facts.

The most important, the crucial fact with which we have to deal is conscious thought; and, in the face of this, materialism has utterly broken down. On this point, I wish to let the great voices of the scientific world be heard for themselves.

In his address on "Scientific Materialism" (*Fragments of Science*, p. 120), Mr. Tyndall expresses the opinion that the materialist has a right to assert an intimate relation between thought and certain molecular motions in the brain. Then he adds: "I do not think he is entitled to say that his molecular groupings and his molecular motions *explain* everything. In reality, they explain nothing. . . . The problem of the connection of body and soul is as insoluble in its modern form as it was in the pre-scientific ages."

Mr. Huxley, in treating of "Bishop Berkeley on the Metaphysics of Sensation" (*Critiques and Addresses*, p. 314), declares, "If I were obliged to choose between absolute materialism and absolute idealism, I should feel compelled to accept the latter alternative."

Instead of quoting long passages on this point from Mr. Spencer, I choose rather to give Mr. Fiske's summing up of his general position. He says, "Mr. Spencer has most conclusively demonstrated that, from the scientific point of view, the hypothesis of the materialists is not only as untenable to-day as it ever has been, but must always remain inferior in philosophic value to the opposing spiritualistic hypothesis" (*Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii., p. 436).

And his own position Mr. Fiske sums up in these brief words: "Henceforth, we may regard materialism as ruled out, and relegated to that limbo of crudities to which we, some time since, consigned the hypothesis of special creations" (*Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii., p. 445).

It is no part of my purpose to trace the processes of scien-

tific reasoning by which this end has been attained. I only wish to note the fact, and to help honest religious thinkers to see and be grateful for the gifts of science. Materialism, then, is gone by. Henceforth, Religion may gladly look upon all the fair, the magnificent, the terrible forms of matter as only veils that, while they conceal, do still more reveal the features, the outlines, and the movements of the Infinite Life that they only clothe and manifest.

6. As Science holds us by the hand, I think I may safely say that she leads us one step further into the heart of this grand mystery.

The form behind and manifested in and through what we call matter is really spirit, we say. But that is not enough for Religion. To be — in the words of Spencer — "ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed," this is grand and wonderful. But Religion has dared to hope that this infinite power was Father and Friend. And now, if Herbert Spencer may be allowed to speak for her, Science asserts, at least, demonstrable kinship between the human soul and this "Infinite and Eternal Energy." These are Mr. Spencer's words: "The final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man is that the Power manifested throughout the universe distinguished as material is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness" (*Religion: A Retrospect and Prospect*).

And, with more elaboration and in greater detail, the Rev. F. E. Abbot (*Scientific Theism*, p. 209) asserts of the universe, as the direct teaching and final result of science, that, "because, as an infinite organism, it thus manifests infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, or thought, feeling, and will in their infinite fulness, and because these three constitute the essential manifestations of personality, it" — the universe —

"must be conceived as Infinite Person, Absolute Spirit, Creative Source, and Eternal Home of the derivative finite personalities which depend upon it, but are no less real than itself."

Thus have the patient feet of Science led the way to the heights,

"... through nature up to nature's God."

Such and so magnificent are her gifts to Religion.

7. But the catalogue of her services is not yet ended. Still the work goes on. For it is her spirit and method that are scattering the clouds of superstition and inhuman theology, the still lingering remnants of the primeval darkness that once overhung the whole earth, so helping religion to break, like a sun, through the noxious vapors, and illumine the world.

Those who are committed to the impossible task of identifying with religion dogmas and customs that cannot bear the light may well be jealous of Science and her work. For just so certainly as she is of the race of the immortals, so certainly they must die. It is the old battle between Apollo and the dragons; and the issue is not uncertain. But it is for us, as Unitarians, to accept without reserve the method of Science, which is the only method of knowledge. Then, though in ever so hopeless a minority to-day, our leadership of the world's religious future is assured. Science can destroy only God's enemies and ours; for she is the very leader of the divine armies of light and truth.

8. One more point I wish to set down, not as an achievement, but as a hope, if not a prophecy. I dare to believe that some day this same science will discover immortality. However firmly we may believe, we cannot yet say we know. I am aware that many have no question, and say they care for no more proof. But, when any man says, "I know,"—

unless he is in possession of facts not generally recognized,— the utmost that he can honestly mean is that he feels a very strong assurance. I, too, believe: —

> I cannot think the world shall end in naught,
> That the abyss shall be the grave of thought,—
>
> That e'er oblivion's shoreless sea shall roll
> O'er love and wonder and the lifeless soul.

Neither have I any prying curiosity as to the details of that other life. But, in regard to the simple fact, I should like to feel beneath my feet the solid rock of demonstration. For could we not all bear with bravery and patience the incidents of a journey that leads to such an issue?

Now, if this other life be a fact, and if its realities be not far away, if its activities press close upon us and mingle themselves with our daily lives, I see nothing unreasonable in supposing that one day this may be demonstrated to the satisfaction of all candid men. Such, at least, is my hope.

These, then, are some items in the debt of Religion to Science. Religion is man's search after right relations to God and to his fellow-man. Science, distrusted so long, is found to be the unfallen Lucifer, the light-bearer, God's very archangel, come to guide Religion into the discovery of these relations. Let them hereafter work hand in hand in completing the foundations and rearing the homes and temples of the city of God, which is the city of a perfected humanity.

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Immortality and Modern Thought.

THE wise student will be very cautious in his statements about the primitive man. He has never been seen or studied. What he thought, said or did, is therefore subject-matter for guessing, but not for knowledge. Scientific faith can resurrect what may be his semblance; but the accuracy of the portrait can always be impeached.

It is said that an Englishman and a Yankee were once discussing the relative antiquity of their respective families. The Englishman declared that he could trace his to a nobleman who came over with the Conqueror, and that there was little doubt that this nobleman's ancestral line ran back to the Cæsars. But the Yankee, with a modesty that occasionally manifests itself in disputes of this kind, quietly remarked that he had at home the genealogical table of his family; and that, somewhere well down the margin, there was a note to the effect that "at about this time the world was created." I suppose that no scholar, to-day, disputes the fact that even the humblest of us can now trace his ancestry so far back that, in comparison with its dim antiquity, the ark of Noah must be looked upon as quite a modern vessel. But, even then, the primitive man, so far from being historical, is not even a tradition or a myth; for even the traditions and myths that gather about the idea of the fancied "beginning" are moulded very largely on the patterns of the times that produced them.

I thus emphasize this point to make clear how ill-founded is any loose talk about the primitive man's thoughts on the subject of a future life. The earliest man of whose thoughts on any subject we possess any reliable information is relatively well on towards the modern age; for an authority like Prof. Marsh, of Yale, tells us that two hundred thousand years is a moderate estimate of the time that has elapsed since the first human consciousness dawned upon what until then had been only an animal world. And, in comparison with this, the Pyramids are of yesterday.

It is doubtless true that there are races of men still alive, — open books for our study, — whose type of thought is older than the hoariest of Egyptian antiquities. But even the slowest on the road have marched on to a point very far this side of the twilight that hides the early morning of the world.

I have made all this very plain, because I regard the statement I am about to make as so very important that I do not wish it weakened by even an appearance of claiming for it more than is really its due. This statement is that a belief in continued personal existence after death seems to be not so much an invention or discovery as it does an original endowment and integral part of man. I say *seems*, because, beyond the farthest point we can reach in our backward investigations, we have only inference as our guide. But, as far back as we can go, we find the belief universal, and bearing even then no traces of being a *parvenu*. Whatever disputes there may be among scholars as to the antiquity or universality of any theistic faith, or anything that can properly be called religion, I think there is no question about this. What I regard as the proof significance of it will be treated later on. At present, I wish only to mark the fact. Man, as we know him, has never seemed able to

think of death as a limit to his conscious existence. He has always treated the grave as an incident in his career, not as the end of it. Death, treated as an end, is a modern invention. Who knows but it ought to be regarded and treated as one of the diseases of progress? We have learned a thousand new facts about the universe; and we have built up new theories on the basis of our facts. And, because the facts yet known are not large enough for our human dreams, some wise men are in haste to strangle the dreams. Possibly, it would be quite as wise to wait a little, and see if there are not more facts yet out of which we may build an addition to our universe, so making it large enough to furnish a home even for so great a thing as a soul.

That we may feel anew how large a part of human life has been that which lies beyond the death limit, I wish to recall to you briefly a few things that you all well know. The very fact that we are accustomed to charge the entire past of human history with excessive other-worldliness only emphasizes the point we have in hand.

Any one who makes a study of the barbaric races will be struck by this, as perhaps the most significant fact about them,— that their whole life is a tyranny, dominated by the spirits of the dead. You may call it a degrading superstition, an over-belief, or what you will; but the fact remains. And it is the fact that now concerns us. In birth and in death, in all that concerns personal, family or tribal life, it is the dead who rule. Whatever religion there is, is a religion of the dead. Whatever morality exists, the dead ones confirm it or suspend it, as they will. The history of these peoples might appropriately be written under the title of "The Reign of the Dead."

If we pass on to consider the first great civilizations of the world, like that of ancient Egypt, the same striking fact

confronts us. It has developed and changed its form, but it remains no less dominant than before. So true is this that the Egyptian hardly began to live before he began to get ready to die. The king fought his battles and sat on his throne by the help of the dead. The monuments that have astonished the world, and so long looked calmly in the face of all-devouring time, are the monuments of the dead. The flowers that, pressed and faded, look, after two and a half thousands years of mummy companionship, as if plucked and laid away last summer, are the tributes to the dead. The literature that remains, lighted with hope of the future, with tender trust in the gods, and tender love for the departed, is *The Book of the Dead.*

The facts concerning the other great Oriental civilizations, of India and China, are so similar to these that I need only instance them thus, and pass them by.

And when we come down to more modern times still, to Greece and Rome, how is it? They had begun, in certain limited ways, to conquer and utilize the forces of this world, so as to make it a somewhat more attractive place for ordinary people to live in. And since, in the popular belief, it was only the gods who inhabited the bright Olympus, and common souls must descend to the somewhat shadowy and intangible regions of the underworld, the future life became relatively less attractive. Achilles, in the *Iliad*, has indeed no doubt of the future state of existence ; but the prospect of giving up his powerful physical life here under the blue sky is so little alluring that he declares he would rather serve a keeper of swine here on earth than be the king of all the dead. But, on the other hand, Socrates looks forward with the most delightful anticipation to a meeting and companionship with the heroes of the olden time. Though we cannot now accept the most of his arguments in favor of

it, still we must admire his serene faith in the might of his soul to meet and vanquish the universal conqueror. The Greek and the Roman had found no place for a future abode save an underground cavern or some impossible Island of the Blessed. His universe was not yet big enough for a soul that was worth keeping.

The earlier Hebrew thought, so far as the Bible reveals it to us, laid little emphasis on the land beyond the grave. It may well be that the early Hebrew reformers reacted strongly from the excessive other-worldliness of the Egyptian life out of which they had come. They may well have felt that this world and its possibilities had been too much overshadowed by the other. But, as we read even the Bible between the lines, hints of witchcraft and familiar spirits let us into the open secret of the real life of the people. And, peculiar though they were, we know they were not so much unlike their neighbors. While, in later Hebrew thought, the hidden undergrowth of belief and feeling springs up into a luxuriant development that sucks out the life of everything that attempts to rival it. This world and all its belongings become only a sort of proscenium before which, on its little stage, a preparatory piece or prologue is enacted, while the curtain is getting ready to rise on the real drama.

Christianity, at first, was an apocalypse. With its promise of "new heavens and a new earth," so soon to appear in place of the rapidly "dissolving view" of the present order, the things of this life were made to seem as nothing in comparison with the "glory that shall follow." This expected speedy ending of all mundane affairs made not only "afflictions which are but for a moment" seem "light," but it manifestly affected the estimate of great moral and social problems, such as marriage, property and slavery.

All the way down through the Middle Age, purgatory,

hell, and heaven were quite as real places in the popular imagination as any provinces or cities laid down on the map. And, even up to the present time, Orthodoxy teaches that this life is but a probation, and that the only real object of it is to get ready to die.

So much review of the past has appeared to me to be necessary, and that for two reasons. First, I wish these facts to be in your minds, to serve as a background against which our modern attitude may stand out more clearly. And, secondly, this attitude of the past will, I think, be seen to possess an important significance in our later discussion.

Leaving the past, however, for a little while, let us now consider some phases of contemporary thought.

The central significance of the Renaissance was nothing less and nothing other than an awaking from a world-trance of other-worldliness, and a discovery of this world. The other life had been everything; and the supposed preparation for it had been by a process of magic, almost or quite wholly apart from any natural connection of cause and effect. Now the worth of this life began to be felt for its own sake. And, further, it began to be believed that the connection between this life and the next was genetic, not merely magical; and that therefore the best preparation for the next world might be the making the most and best of this one.

Out of this state of mind science was born. And the essential spirit of science is the careful investigation of facts and the demand for proof as a condition of belief. It reverses the old idea of "authority for truth," and, instead of it, takes for its motto, "Truth for authority." It thus discovered that much of the ancient and still prevalent belief as to another life was superstition. But many of us to-day need to apply the scientific method to the study of the word "superstition," and so better learn its meaning. We need

to learn that labelling a belief "superstition" does not kill it. We even need to learn that proving it to be a superstition is not necessarily proving it to be untrue. A superstition is only an over-belief,— *super-sto*, that which stands over, exceeds,— something that reaches beyond what is at present proved to be true. That which is superstition to-day may be science to-morrow.

This, however, is not saying anything against science. The scientific demand for proof as the basis of all claims to knowledge is simply a demand for common honesty. For he who does not make a distinction between his knowledge and his beliefs or hopes may be very religious, according to popular standards; but he most certainly is not moral.

This scientific demand for verification, then, has enormously contracted the range of our celestial geography. When suddenly asked for the "titles clear to mansions in the skies," either they could not be produced or else the evidence for them was disallowed. And, since the popular belief in a future life could offer for itself no proof that did not seem to itself need proving, there has appeared that tremendous reaction of feeling that takes the name of Agnosticism. It is popular now in some quarters to smile at one who dares even discover the fact that he hopes for immortality, as though he had avowed a family claim to certain "castles in Spain."

Agnosticism commends itself to us by its honesty and its modesty. And it is certainly a blessed ignorance that takes the place of the most that Orthodoxy has been teaching us as absolute knowledge about the future world. Let me adopt Macbeth's creed, that life

> . . . "Is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing,"—

let us with him walk

"The way to dusty death."

This were unspeakably better than the old faith. So I have no very hard words for agnosticism as compared with the tyrant it discrowns. But I can no more submit to the new tyrant than to the old. For when it attempts to set limits to investigation, and warns us off even from a rational search for "the undiscovered country," then I rebel. Comte, its first secular high priest, attempted it even in regard to an investigation of the physical heavens; and hardly was he dead before the spectroscope turned his wisdom into folly. Who knows but some spiritual spectroscope may play the same havoc with the wise ignorance of agnosticism concerning the spiritual stars of which the world has always been thinking it caught at least occasional glimpses?

The enormous growth of modern science, and the resulting spirit of agnosticism,— these have largely determined the attitude of mind towards this subject of the great mass of the cultured and the semi-cultured people of Europe and America.

But this growth of science, grand as it is, at present is manifestly one-sided and incomplete. We have mapped the most of the earth, and gained a partial control of some of its forces: we have made extraordinary excursions into the heavens, and measured the distances of some of the stars; but man is as yet very largely an unknown country. Even many of the primary problems still wait for solution. Tyndall confesses that "the problem of the connection of body and soul is as insoluble in its modern form as it was in the pre-scientific ages" (*Fragments of Science*, p. 120). And how much we may not know as yet of the universe about us is hinted at most remarkably by no less a man than Jevons.

He says (*Principles of Science*, p. 516), "We cannot deny even the strange suggestion of Young, that there may be independent worlds, some possibly existing in different parts of space, but others, perhaps, pervading each other unseen and unknown in the same space."

Many have been inclined to give up the soul because they could not find it with the dissecting knife. And others have given it up because our ordinary conceptions of space and matter have furnished for it, to the imagination, no appropriate home. But both these positions are utterly unscientific,— a leaping to conclusions before all the evidence is in. And this haste to settle one's opinions is always an evidence of an uneducated or only partially educated mind. Homer had no universe grand enough to furnish a worthy immortality; and so his Achilles looks upon it as a calamity. The world of modern science is not grand enough yet to make room for an immortal soul; and so the belief faints for lack of room to expand and air to breathe. Possibly, some future age may treat both ancient Greece and the present time as illustrations of the necessary failure of men who try to build before sufficient materials are gathered.

Then one of the diseases of our present civilization — a necessary result of an accumulation of facts and material development so rapid that we have not yet been able to master and use them from the stand-point of our higher manhood — is a sort of world-weariness that makes many people question as to whether they want any future life. The present life, with its worry and bustle and confusion, has been too much for them. They are weary and only want to rest. They confuse life with its unpleasant conditions, and so are willing to be rid of both together.

I only mark this now in glancing at some of the more important phases of the attitude towards this subject of the

modern world. And now let us turn sharply round and look in the other direction. Contemporary with this growth of science and agnosticism are the enormous native development of Spiritualism and the sweeping invasion from our old Aryan home of that strange-looking exotic, Theosophy. Science comes out of its inner temple, and by the mouth of its more forward spokesmen announces to the waiting world its verdict, "*Agnosco.*" And, representative of many other philosophic authorities, one of our own sages utters the oracular stone for bread, "No wise man will trouble himself about the matter." But, reasonable or unreasonable, the toiling, struggling, dying, but still hopeful masses refuse to look on nonentity as a desirable acquisition. So their answer to science and philosophy is Spiritualism and Theosophy. In vain do the wise men shout, "Atavism," and talk about a reversion of the civilized world to the animistic superstitions of our barbaric ancestors. The loving, hungry human heart still wails its protest in such lines as those of Holmes: —

> "Is this the whole sad story of creation,
> Told by its breathing myriads o'er and o'er,—
> One glimpse of day, then black annihilation,
> A sunlit passage to a sunless shore?
>
> "Give back our faith, ye mystery-solving lynxes;
> Robe us once more in heaven-aspiring creeds!
> Better was dreaming Egypt with her sphinxes,
> The stony convent with its cross and beads!"

These last two lines I, for one, cannot accept. Better "black annihilation" than endless heaven at the price of endless hell. Neither am I willing to have my faith given back to me as a charity loaf, conceded to me on account of a supposed unreasonable heart-hunger that defies the logic of the head. If the temple that is offered me be not large

enough for both my faith and my brains, I will still stay in the wilderness and worship in tents, looking for a glimpse of some "better country."

We are now ready to raise the question as to the present standing of this problem.

I cannot say, "Amen," to those who declare that the logical outcome of unbelief is suicide,— that if there be no future then this life is not worth having. I cannot undertake to answer for others; but, as for myself, the vision of the blue dome above us, of the wide night sky of stars, of green fields with trees, of cloud-kissing mountains, of wind-swept seas; the love of wife and child and friend; the spectacle of the world's activities, with the glimpses that may be gained of the upward march of humanity along the pathway of the past; the comedy, tragedy, heroism,— all this is so wonderful, so fascinating to me, that I am glad every day that I may have even a brief look at so marvellous a scene. However it ends or when, I am grateful that I was invited to be even a humble spectator.

I say this, not because I imagine that my personal feeling can be important to you, but because I wish my argument to be freed in your minds from any suspicion of being unduly biassed by a personal longing for immortality. I do wish it. But I wish still more not to be deceived. Whatever the fact, I desire to know it, that I may adjust myself to the reality of my position. A prejudice either for or against a fact is something I cannot understand. Let us try, then, with eyes open all round, to see how the matter stands.

In the first place, then, traditional Orthodoxy has nothing to say to any one who needs to have anything said. What it offers in the way of proof is sadly in need of being proved itself. Church tradition is authority only to those who have not investigated it. Biblical infallibility is a thing of the

past. The reappearance of Jesus after death may still be accepted by either one of two classes: first, by those who accept it on authority as a dogma; and, secondly, by those who hold that similar reappearances take place to-day. In the first case it is not evidence; and, in the second, it is believed on account of a supposed present fact instead of its serving as proof of this fact. The Church, then, is, for the present, out of court as a witness.

The transcendental "I know," "I feel," that seems to be satisfactory to so many easy-going liberals,—this, also, is utterly lacking in probative force to any mind that stands in need of proof. How can a present consciousness testify to the continuance of personal identity into an indefinite future? It seems to me that this talk of knowledge on such a basis is simply a misuse of words. And the somewhat high and mighty air of some who speak slightingly of the asserted low and materialistic tone of those who seek for evidence, and who talk of their personal consciousness of immortality as though it were a sort of saint's aureole that spontaneously encircled the heads of the spiritually-minded, appear to me to gain little in the way of certainty to offset their loss in the way of humility.

Turning now from these negatives, let us see what we can find that leans at least towards the positive.

With only such exceptions as prove the rule, the statement may be broadly made that the desire for continued existence is a universal one. When people tell me that they do not desire a future life, I feel practically certain that the conditions of their life here are such that they shrink from their indefinite continuance. And, not being able to conceive themselves as freed from these hampering conditions, they are conscious of only a longing for rest. And yet it seems clear to me that it is not life they would be

delivered from, but only a certain kind of life. The often-quoted words of Tennyson, I believe, sink their plummet down to the bottom of deepest truth: —

> "Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No life that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly longed for death."

And, when Mr. Frederic Harrison tells me that I am selfish to wish for immortality, that the desire is an immoral one, it is sufficient to reply that he is selfish and immoral to desire to be alive to-morrow or this afternoon. At any rate, it is only the difference of my wanting a somewhat larger slice off the same loaf. Or when Dr. Maudsley writes,— I quote from a private letter to me; but, as they are his well-known opinions, I am letting out no secret,— "To me, it always seems something of a marvel that any one, looking back on what men have actually been from the beginning, and around upon what they are now, not abstractly, but actually, in their daily doings and being, should think the universe would gain anything by securing their immortality, or need feel itself under any sort of obligation to perpetuate them forever. An eternal Bushman, for example, or an eternal New York Fifth Avenue millionnaire! An eternal chimpanzee were a less ill use to make eternally of the matter of either of them, surely!"— when, I say, Dr. Maudsley writes me like this, I cannot help thinking the Doctor forgets that, if the Bushman and the millionnaire are souls, there may be reason to look upon them as seeds of something better to which they may grow before eternity is quite exhausted. And, when any one informs me that I am only "a worm of the dust," with no right to aspire to such a destiny, I reply that this is just the point in dispute, and that I will accept any lineage, whatever it be, when it is established.

The practical universality of human belief in immortality in all the past has already been made plain. It is still taken for granted by the world's millions. The poets who coin the common heart's sorrows and hopes into song still chant it. The wide-spread reactions towards the older faiths have here their main motive. And the springing up of Spiritualism and Theosophy on grounds burnt over by the fires of the orthodox hell, and right in the teeth of the east winds that blow from the cheerless seas of doubt, testify to the hunger of men for some assurance that the loved and departed are not also the lost.

I wish now to hint at what seems to me the proof significance of this simple fact.

Death certainly seems to be the end, the utter dissolution and destruction of the individual. And, by as much as this appearance seems conclusive, by so much does the wonder grow that anybody should ever have thought otherwise. To talk of shadow and trance and dream is entirely beside the point. It is the paradoxical fact itself, and not the inadequate attempts to explain it, that is the object of our wonder. Familiarity with it has blunted the edge of the marvel. Suppose a dog should be found pondering Hamlet's soliloquy, or bent in earnest thought above the motionless body of one of his companions and raising the question, If a dog die, shall he live again? And yet, if the problem has no more relevancy to the case of man than to that of any other animal, why should it ever have become a problem in the one case more than in the other?

On any theory conceivable, this story of immortal hope is a tale that the universe has whispered to the trusting heart of man. He stands related to the universe as the coin is related to the die. Whatever is in him was first in it. Even the most transient and passing characteristics stand vitally

related to external facts that produced them. Nothing comes from nothing. And any characteristic of man that has existed always and everywhere must, it seems to me, be regarded as matching a permanent reality in the universe itself. The basis of all science, the uniformity of natural law, has for itself no surer foundation than this. Indeed, this is its foundation. I cannot see, therefore, why we are not justified, on the clearest scientific grounds, in claiming that this story, which the universe has always been telling to man (no matter through what symbols or by what methods), is an echo of some reality that is a part of the universe itself.

And then, again, it may be said that, so long as the most materialistic science utterly fails to prove the negative, no one can declare the grandest trust to be unreasonable. This faith, so natural to the human heart, is in possession of the ground. It will vacate when the proper warrant is produced. But, until it is, no one need apologize for his faith. So far as any science knows to the contrary, there may be, within each of us, a psychical body that death only releases into an immediate and larger activity; and the inter-stellar spaces may be the scene of intelligent activity so real and intense that life here would appear by comparison only as its shadow. And these bodies and these worlds need not be thought of as unimaginable and intangible spirit, either. They may be as material as the ether, and yet invisible and intangible to our present senses. And, if there be an immortal life at all, I believe we shall be no "unembodied thoughts," but as material as we are now, only in some higher and finer way.

If any one should say that, after having declared my conviction that materialism is dead, I now turn round and accept a theory of the immortal life that is essentially materialistic, I should reply, First, I do not yet *accept* any theory;

and, secondly, this conception of future possibilities at which I hint has nothing whatever in common with what is both popularly and philosophically meant by materialism. Such an objection would only be a catching at the word and missing the substance.

Materialism has broken down. It is already an antiquated phase of science. Even Clifford, with his "mind-stuff," and Haeckel, with his "molecular souls," are confessions that they need something besides "dead matter"— which, by the way, does not exist — to explain even the lower forms of life. And, in presence of the higher problems, of thought and consciousness, materialism is as dumb as the Egyptian sphinx.

But, supposing immortal life to be a fact, is there any prospect of its ever being discovered and verified as a reality? No less an authority than Mr. John Fiske says (*Destiny of Man*, p. 111), "Scientifically speaking, there is not a particle of evidence for either view,"— that is, either for or against immortality. And he goes on to speak of desisting "from the futile attempt to introduce scientific demonstration into a region which confessedly transcends human experience." At the same time, he thinks (and he evidently includes himself in the statement) that men will go on believing it as they have in the past.

I confess it seems to me no little surprising to hear a man like Mr. Fiske talking in this way. I find myself almost universally in accord with him; but, in this case, he seems to me to have forgotten his stand-point as a scientific man. Does the problem of immortality "transcend human experience"? Is not this an unscientific assumption of the negative of the very point in dispute? If, in reality, any man has ever entered into an immortal life, then, since this man was and is human, the fact of living beyond death is, in his case, a fact of human experience, and so in no wise

transcends it. And, if he could come and enter into relations with us once more, then this converse with an immortal would be as much a part of human experience as any commonplace dialogue with one's next-door neighbor.

Now, I suppose that neither Mr. Fiske nor any one else would feel himself warranted in saying that, if there be immortals, this supposition of possible relations with them would be antecedently or inherently impossible. Neither would it require any one to believe in the supernatural; for such converse, if real, would be as natural a fact as any other. Whether, then, this problem be one that "transcends human experience" is a question that no man has any right, scientific or otherwise, to settle except on the basis of the facts and the evidence.

If immortality be a fact at all, and if it be a fact that touches and concerns us in any way, then most certainly it may come within the range of human experience. It is outside that range no more than this continent was before Columbus sailed. And we know now that even this had been discovered, in ways that never became fruitful to civilization, by sporadic and scattered adventurers, over and over again. So, it is claimed, have the mysterious seas of death been crossed over and over again. We now dismiss these stories as idle tales, just as, for many years, the voyages of Marco Polo were looked upon as romantic inventions. If, however, this pathway through the mystery should ever be brought under control, charted, and made into a navigable way, then we should read the old-time stories in a different spirit. The uncertainty, the intermittency, the apparent lawlessness, of these manifestations in the past, is no more against the possibility of reducing them to law and order and knowledge, and so bringing them under voluntary control, than were the first manifestations of steam, electricity, and magnetism

arguments in discredit of the locomotive, the telegraph and the mariner's compass. Whatever be the facts, the mind of man, by the guidance of the scientific method, is as competent to deal with the one case as it has proved itself to be with the others. While the subject itself is as much more dignified and important than these as life is more important than the passing incidents of a day. I therefore protest, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, against both the shallow and flippant scientific disdain of this question, and the airy, aristocratic, dilettante indifference with which theologians treat it, while all the time they glare with holy horror at any man who presumes to doubt what they are so ready to admit is outside the limits of proof.

It is sometimes said that, if there be anything in the popular claims of communication with those we call the dead, or if immortality is capable of being proved as a fact of science, it ought to have been known long ago; and that the fact of the lateness of the claim in human experience is much against it. But I fail to see the force of this objection, either from the stand-point of human history or of divine providence.

In the first place, it is claimed — among all peoples — that these whispers from the other side have been heard in all ages from the very first. But, even though all these claims be disallowed,— as they ought to be until established, — it can still be said that there has been no more absolute need of certainty on this point than on many others. And a parallel question might be asked concerning many other discoveries, the knowledge of which has contributed so greatly to the growth of civilization. If God be, and if he love us, why did he not tell us a thousand things that we, as matter of fact, have been left to find out?

Thus, in human growth, things have their natural advent,

— they come "in the fulness of time." First, man is animal; then comes the further evolution of mind; then the moral becomes dominant. May it not well be that the spiritual should appear as the blossom and crown of all? This, at any rate, is Paul's order of progress.

I shall now venture to set my feet, for at least a little way, within the borders of a country that has been at least very rarely traversed on an occasion like this,— the regions of Psychic Research.

Some of you must be more or less familiar with the work of the English Society. I have been a member of the American Society from the first, and much of the time chairman of one of its committees. Besides this, I have done what I could as an original investigator for eight or ten years. I think I may therefore claim, without any breach of modesty, to know something more of the subject than those who have given no careful attention to it whatever. Many dismiss it on *a priori* grounds; many others have made up their minds on the basis of one or two public and palpably fraudulent séances; while others know only what, from time to time, they see in the newspapers. It is evident that these people have no right to hold an opinion, much less to express it. And yet, if your experience is like mine, you will find that they are more certain about it than anybody else, and quite ready with their shallow judgment as to the folly of anybody who has really taken the trouble to study the matter.

I have long felt it to be a part of my duty to investigate the subject, and to have at least a few facts, for or against, on which to base an opinion. Some millions of people in Europe and America are Spiritualists, on the basis of what they claim to be personal experience. The belief seems to me to be either the most lamentable delusion or the grandest truth in the world. Which? It really would seem to

be worth while to find out, if for no other reason than to deliver the thousands that may be led astray by a fancy. When my parishioners come to me in sorrow and beg for guidance I feel that I ought to have something for them better than a prejudice.

If a future life can be demonstrated, if communication between that world and this be a possibility, I should most certainly be glad. I do not see how it would change the lines of my regular work. It would only put beneath my feet a certainty where now is but a hope.

I have no time to go deeply into this phase of the subject, even if it were advisable to-day. To treat it at all adequately would require at least an essay by itself. In what I do say, beyond what is accepted by competent scientific investigators, I shall confine myself to the results of my own personal experience, and to briefest hints even here.

Three things I now regard as settled. They do not at all prove the claim of Spiritualism; but they do go a wonderful way in at least illustrating the power of the soul to transcend ordinary physical limits, and act through other than the recognized channels of communication. It is said that one day Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson were taking a walk together in Concord, when a wild-eyed Second Adventist rushed up to them with the news — "important, if true" — that the world was about coming to an end. After Mr. Parker had replied that the message did not concern him, as he lived in Boston, Mr. Emerson quietly remarked, "Well, suppose it is: I think I can get along without it." In the light of already established facts, it begins to look as though the soul might, with some degree of confidence, quote the reply of Mr. Emerson. What are these facts?

First, hypnotism or mesmerism. This, which a French

scientific commission once scouted, after what it called an investigation, is now recognized by the medical fraternity — in the words of one of them — as having "a distinct therapeutic value." I have known a case of a young lady's being put into the mesmeric sleep and having a serious surgical operation performed with as complete unconsciousness as though under the influence of ether. All the ordinary phenomena I have witnessed in private over and over again.

Secondly, the fact of clairvoyance is established beyond question. Under certain, as yet little understood, conditions, both seeing and hearing are possible apart from the ordinary use of eye or ear or ethereal vibrations. What is it then that sees and hears?

Thirdly, it is a fact that mind may impress mind, and, in some exceptional cases, far away, even half way round the world.

Now, no one of these facts, nor all of them combined, goes far enough to prove the central claim of modern Spiritualism. But this apparent semi-independence of the body does at least make the question a rational one as to whether the soul is not an entity capable of getting along without the present physical body. And, while we are on the borderland of stupendous facts like these, I confess I find it hard to be patient with the conceited and flippant ignorance that waives them aside with a supercilious air, while it gravely potters over a fish's fin or a dug-up vertebra of the tail of some extinct mastodon, calling one science and the other only superstition.

Connected with modern Spiritualism there is, beyond question, an immense amount of deliberate fraud. Many people have found that they can get a living in this way easier than by working for it. Then there is much of honest self-delusion, much honest misinterpretation of facts. Cer-

tain mysterious things do occur; and they are staightway supposed to mean what they may not mean at all. But all the bad logic of the world is not to be found here. It sometimes gets out of the séance room, and climbs even into the chair of the philosophic or scientific professor. So let us not be too severe on the bad logic of those who have had no special training.

But when all the fraud, all the delusion, all the misinterpretation, have been brushed one side, there remains a respectable — nay, even a striking and startling — body of fact that as yet has no place in our recognized theories of the world and of man. Whatever their explanation, they are at least worth explaining. And, whether they prove or disprove Spiritualism, they cannot fail to throw important light on many problems touching the nature of man. The so-called explanations that I have seen, such as those of Drs. Beard and Carpenter and those of many others, are so inadequate to account for facts of my own experience that, by natural reaction, they almost incline one to grasp the opinions they combat, for the sake of having something a little more solid to hold by.

That physical objects are sometimes moved in a way that no muscular pressure, conscious or unconscious, can account for, I know. That information is sometimes imparted that was never in the possession of either of the sitters I also know. It is true that these cases, in my own experience, are not yet common enough to preclude the possibility of their being accidentally correct; though the circumstances have been such as to make me regard this as a strained and improbable explanation. To have information given me that it was impossible the medium could know, this has been a very common experience. To call it mind-reading is easy; but what is mind-reading? One insoluble mystery is hardly

a satisfactory explanation for another. Automatic writing, when the medium was unconscious of what she was writing, and this of a most remarkable character, is another common experience. These are little facts, you may say. But so was the fact that a piece of amber, under certain circumstances, would attract a straw. Science knows no little facts; and any fact, until it is explained, must be either a constant challenge or a standing reproach to any science worthy of the name.

I have never paid the slightest attention to anything that occurred in the dark, or under conditions where deception as to fact was even possible. I have seen a plenty of these, but have always ruled them out of court. And, besides, most of the things that have impressed me have occurred when the medium was a personal friend, and not a "professional" at all.

I must let these bare statements stand as hints only of a story it would take me hours to tell. As the result of all this, am I a Spiritualist? No. Would I like to be one? I would like to be able to demonstrate the fact of continued existence, and the possibility of opening communication between the two worlds. But I am a good deal more anxious for the truth than I am to believe either one way or the other.

If not in the present age, then in some more fortunate one, I believe the question both can and will be settled. And I cannot understand how any one should treat the matter as of slight importance. Thoreau's remark, "One world at a time," has often been quoted as being the end of all wisdom on the subject. But I cannot so regard it. I do not think, as some do, that morality is dependent on it. But I do think that one's belief here may so change his life emphasis as to put a new meaning into his whole career. If I know I am to die in two years, I shall certainly lay my life

out on a different scale from that which would be appropriate if I could confidently look forward to forty years more of life; and, in spite of George Eliot's "Choir Invisible," it seems to me that the enthusiasm which works only for a certain indefinite future here on earth, while all the time it is believed that the whole thing is finally to end in smoke, is, to say the least, a little forced and unnatural. And among common people, not sublimely unselfish, it will not be strange if they care more for present satisfaction than they do for some unimaginable benefit to some unknown people that, perhaps, is to be attained in a thousand years.

But, if all men could know that death is only an incident, and that life is to continue, for good or ill, right on; and if they could know that, under the working of the law of cause and effect, they are making that future life day by day; that its condition is to be determined thus, not by creed or belief, or ritual or worship, as such, but by character,— is it not plain that this would become the mightiest of all possible motives? If it can be attained, here is a power able to lift and transform the world.

It is not a question, then, that is all in the air, and is of no practical importance. I know of none that I believe to be more practical.

But, if this certainty is never to be attained, I believe with Mr. Fiske in this,— that the great majority of men and women will still cherish the hope, at any rate in hours of sorrow and loss. In the glare of day, when they are prosperous, while the sun shines, they may forget it or doubt it; but, when the night comes, they will look up at the stars, and dream at least of other and happier worlds. And this, at any rate, can be said for the dream: that no advance of knowledge as yet has proved its right to impeach it, or take away its comfort from the hearts that ache for the sight of faces that have vanished.

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